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SECOND SERIES

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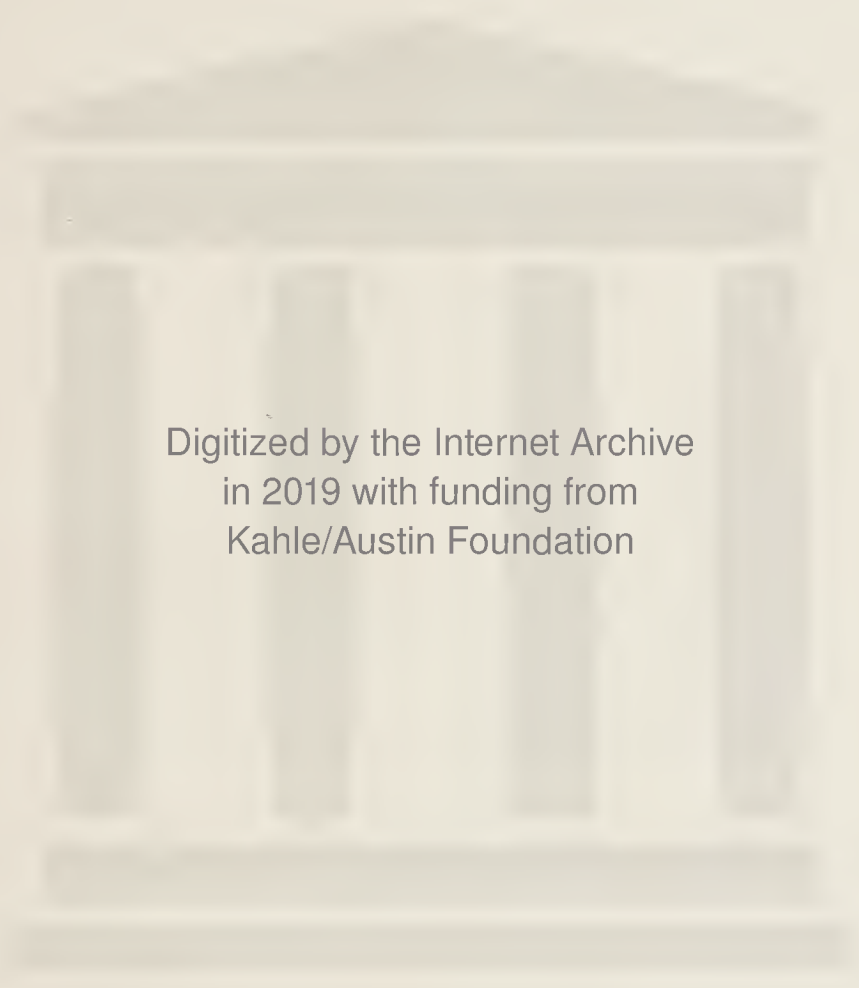
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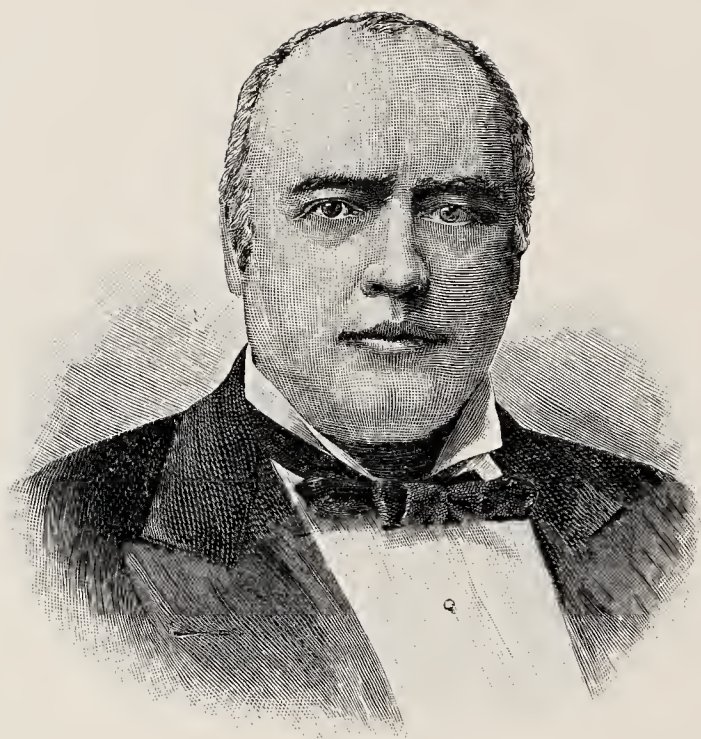
(SECOND SERIES)

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The Truth	A Thanksgiving Sermon
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What Must We Do to be Saved?	Art and Morality



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LECTURES

AND ESSAYS

(A SELECTION)

BY

COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL

(Second Series)

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INGERSOLL'S LECTURES AND ESSAYS

SECOND SERIES

SOME MISTAKES OF MOSES

INTRODUCTORY.

WERE we allowed to read the Bible as we do all other books, we should admire its beauties, treasure its worthy thoughts, and account for all its absurd, grotesque, and cruel things, by saying that its authors lived in rude, barbaric times. But we are told that it was written by inspired men ; that it contains the will of God ; that it is perfect, pure, and true in all its parts ; the source and standard of all moral and religious truth ; that it is the star and anchor of all human hope ; the only guide for man, the only torch in Nature's night. These claims are so at variance with every known recorded fact, so palpably absurd, that every free, un-biassed soul is forced to raise the standard of revolt.

We read the Pagan sacred books with profit and delight. With myth and fable we are ever charmed, and find a pleasure in the endless repetition of the beautiful, poetic, and absurd. We find, in all these records of the past, philosophies and dreams, and efforts stained with tears of great and tender souls, who tried to pierce the mystery of life and death, to answer the eternal questions of the Whence and Whither, and vainly sought to make, with bits of shattered glass, a mirror that

would, in very truth, reflect the face and form of Nature's perfect self.

These myths were born of hopes and fears, and tears, and smiles, and they were touched and coloured by all there is of joy and grief between the rosy dawn of birth and death's sad night. They clothed even the stars with passion, and gave to gods the faults and frailties of the sons of men. In them the winds and wave were music, and all the lakes, and streams, and springs, the mountains, woods, and perfumed dells, were haunted by a thousand fairy forms. They thrilled the veins of Spring with tremulous desire ; made tawny Summer's billowed breast the throne and home of love ; filled Autumn's arms with sun-kissed grapes and gathered sheaves ; and pictured Winter as a weak, old king, who felt, like Lear upon his withered face, Cordelia's tears. These myths, though false, are beautiful, and have for many ages and in countless ways enriched the heart and kindled the thought. But if the world were taught that all these things are true and all inspired of God, and that eternal punishment will be the lot of him who dares deny or doubt, the sweetest myth of all the Fable World would lose its beauty, and become a scorned and hateful thing to every brave and thoughtful man.

I.

I WANT to do what little I can to make my country truly free, to broaden the intellectual horizon of our people, to destroy the prejudices born of ignorance and fear, to do away with the blind worship of the ignoble past, with the idea that all the great and good are dead, that the living are totally depraved, that all pleasures are sins, that sighs and groans are alone pleasing to God, that thought is dangerous, that intellectual courage is a crime, that cowardice is a virtue, that a certain belief is necessary to secure salvation, that to carry a cross in this world will give us a palm in the next, and that we must allow some priest to be the pilot of our souls.

Until every soul is freely permitted to investigate every book and creed and dogma for itself, the world cannot be free. Mankind will be enslaved until there is mental grandeur enough to allow each man to have his thought and say. This earth will be a paradise when men can upon all these questions differ, and yet each grasp each other's hands as friends. It is amazing to me that a difference of opinion upon subjects that we know nothing with certainty about should make us hate, persecute, and despise each other. Why a difference of opinion upon predestination or the Trinity should make people imprison and burn each other seems beyond the comprehension of man; and yet, in all countries where Christians have existed, they have destroyed each other to the exact extent of their power. Why should a believer in God hate an Atheist? Surely the Atheist has not injured God, and surely he is human, capable of joy and pain, and entitled to all the rights of man. Would it not be far better to treat this Atheist at least as well as he treats us?

Christians tell me they love their enemies, and yet all I ask is, not that they love their enemies, not that they love their friends even, but that they treat those who differ from them with

simple fairness. We do not wish to be forgiven, but we wish Christians to so act that we shall not have to forgive them.

If all will admit that all have an equal right to think, then the question is for ever solved; but as long as organised and powerful Churches, pretending to hold the keys of heaven and hell, denounce every person as an outcast and criminal who thinks for himself and denies their authority, the world will be filled with hatred and suffering. To hate man and worship God seems to be the sum of all the creeds.

That which has happened in most countries has happened in ours. When a religion is founded, the educated, the powerful—that is to say, the priests and nobles—tell the ignorant and superstitious—that is to say, the people—that the religion of their country was given to their fathers by God himself; that it is the only true religion; that all others were conceived in falsehood and brought forth in fraud, and that all who believe in the true religion will be happy for ever, while all others will burn in hell. For the purpose of governing the people—that is to say, for the purpose of being supported by the people—the priests and nobles declare this religion to be sacred, and that whoever adds to or takes from it will be burned here by man and hereafter by God. The result of this is that the priests and nobles will not allow the people to change; and when, after a time, the priests, having intellectually advanced, wish to take a step in the direction of progress, the people will not allow them to change. At first the rabble are enslaved by the priests, and afterwards the rabble become the masters.

One of the first things I wish to do is to free the orthodox clergy. I am a great friend of theirs, and, in spite of all they may say against me, I am going to do them a great and lasting service. Upon their necks are visible the marks of the collar, and upon their backs those of the lash. They are not allowed to read and think for themselves. They

are taught like parrots, and the best are those who repeat, with the fewest mistakes, the sentences they have been taught. They sit like owls upon some dead limb of the tree of knowledge, and hoot the same old hoots that have been hooted for nineteen hundred years. Their congregations are not grand enough nor sufficiently civilised to be willing that the poor preachers shall think for themselves. They are not employed for that purpose. Investigation is regarded as a dangerous experiment, and the ministers are warned that none of that kind of work will be tolerated. They are notified to stand by the old creed, and to avoid all original thought as a moral pestilence. Every minister is employed like an attorney—either for plaintiff or defendant—and he is expected to be true to his client. If he changes his mind, he is regarded as a deserter, and denounced, hated, and slandered accordingly. Every orthodox clergyman agrees not to change. He contracts not to find new facts, and makes a bargain that he will deny them if he does. Such is the position of a Protestant minister in this nineteenth century. His condition excites my pity; and, to better it, I am going to do what little I can.

Some of the clergy have the independence to break away, and the intellect to maintain themselves as free men; but most are compelled to submit to the dictation of the orthodox and the dead. They are not employed to give their thoughts, but simply to repeat the ideas of others. They are not expected to give even the doubts that may suggest themselves, but are required to walk in the narrow, verdureless path trodden by the ignorance of the past. The forests and fields on either side are nothing to them. They must not even look at the purple hills, nor pause to hear the babble of the brooks. They must remain in the dusty roads where the guide boards are. They must confine themselves to the "fall of man," the expulsion from the garden, the "scheme of salvation," the "second birth," the atonement, the

happiness of the redeemed, and the misery of the lost. They must be careful not to express any new ideas upon these great questions. It is much safer for them to quote from the works of the dead. The more vividly they describe the sufferings of the unregenerate, of those who attended theatres and balls, and drank wine in summer gardens on the Sabbath-day, and laughed at priests, the better ministers they are supposed to be. They must show that misery fits the good for heaven, while happiness prepares the bad for hell; that the wicked get all their good things in this life, and the good all their evil; that in this world God punishes the people he loves, and in the next the ones he hates; that happiness makes us bad here, but not in heaven; that pain makes us good here, but not in hell.

No matter how absurd these things may appear to the carnal mind, they must be preached, and they must be believed. If they were reasonable, there would be no virtue in believing. Even the publicans and sinners believe reasonable things. To believe without evidence, or in spite of it, is accounted as righteousness to the sincere and humble Christian.

The ministers are in duty bound to denounce all intellectual pride, and to show that we are never quite so dear to God as when we admit that we are poor, corrupt, and idiotic worms; that we should never have been born; that we ought to be damned without the least delay; that we are so infamous that we like to enjoy ourselves; that we love our wives and children better than our God; that we are generous only because we are vile; that we are honest from the meanest motives, and that sometimes we have fallen so low that we have had doubts about the inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures. In short, they are expected to denounce all pleasant paths and rustling trees, to curse the grass and flowers, and glorify the dust and weeds. They are expected to malign the wicked people in the green and happy fields, who sit

and laugh beside the gurgling springs or climb the hills and wander as they will. They are expected to point out the dangers of freedom, the safety of implicit obedience, and to show the wickedness of philosophy, the goodness of faith, the immorality of science, and the purity of ignorance.

Now and then a few pious people discover some young man of a religious turn of mind and a consumptive habit of body, not quite sickly enough to die, nor healthy enough to be wicked. The idea occurs to them that he would make a good orthodox minister. They take up a contribution, and send the young man to some theological school where he can be taught to repeat a creed and despise reason. Should it turn out that the young man had some mind of his own, and, after graduating, should change his opinions and preach a different doctrine from that taught in the school, every man who contributed a dollar towards his education would feel that he had been robbed, and would denounce him as a dishonest and ungrateful wretch.

The pulpit should not be a pillory. Congregations should allow the minister a little liberty. They should, at least, permit him to tell the truth.

They have, in Massachusetts, at a place called Andover, a kind of minister factory, where each professor takes an oath once in five years—that time being considered the life of an oath—that he has not, during the last five years, and will not during the next five years, intellectually advance. There is probably no oath they could easier keep. Probably, since the foundation-stone of that institution was laid there has not been a single case of perjury. The old creed is still taught. They still insist that God is infinitely wise, powerful, and good, and that all men are totally depraved. They insist that the best man God ever made deserved to be damned the moment he was finished. Andover puts its brand upon every minister it turns out, the same as Sheffield and Birmingham brand their wares, and all who see the

brand know exactly what the minister believes, the books he has read, the arguments he relies on, and just what he intellectually is. They know just what he can be depended on to preach, and that he will continue to shrink and shrivel, and grow solemnly stupid day by day, until he reaches the Andover of the grave and becomes truly orthodox for ever.

I have not singled out the Andover factory because it is worse than the others. They are all about the same. The professors, for the most part, are ministers who failed in the pulpit and were retired to the seminary on account of their deficiency in reason and their excess of faith. As a rule, they know nothing of this world, and far less of the next; but they have the power of stating the most absurd propositions with faces solemn as stupidity touched by fear.

Something should be done for the liberation of these men. They should be allowed to grow—to have sun-light and air. They should no longer be chained and tied to confessions of faith, to mouldy books and musty creeds. Thousands of ministers are anxious to give their honest thoughts. The hands of wives and babes now stop their mouths. They must have bread, and so the husbands and fathers are forced to preach a doctrine that they hold in scorn. For the sake of shelter, food, and clothes, they are obliged to defend the childish miracles of the past, and denounce the sublime discoveries of to-day. They are compelled to attack all modern thought, to point out the dangers of science, the wickedness of investigation, and the corrupting influence of logic. It is for them to show that virtue rests upon ignorance and faith, while vice impudently feeds and fattens upon fact and demonstration. It is a part of their business to malign and vilify the Voltaires, Humes, Paines, Humboldts, Tyndalls, Haeckels, Darwins, Spencers, and Drapers, and to bow with uncovered heads before the murderers, adulterers, and persecutors of the world. They are,

for the most part, engaged in poisoning the minds of the young, prejudicing children against science, teaching the astronomy and geology of the Bible, and inducing all to desert the sublime standard of reason.

These orthodox ministers do not add to the sum of knowledge. They produce nothing. They live upon alms. They hate laughter and joy. They officiate at weddings, sprinkle water upon babes, and utter meaningless words and barren promises above the dead. They laugh at the agony of unbelievers, mock at their tears, and of their sorrows make a jest. There are some noble exceptions. Now and then a pulpit holds a brave and honest man. Their congregations are willing that they should think—willing that their ministers should have a little freedom.

As we become civilised, more and more liberty will be accorded to these men, until, finally, ministers will give their best and highest thoughts. The congregations will finally get tired of hearing about the patriarchs and saints, the miracles and wonders, and will insist upon knowing something about the men and women of our day, and the accomplishments and discoveries of our time. They will finally insist upon knowing how to escape the evils of this world instead of the next. They will ask light upon the enigmas of this life. They will wish to know what we shall do with our criminals instead of what God will do with his; how we shall do away with beggary and want; with crime and misery, with prostitution, disease, and famine; with tyranny in all its cruel forms; with prisons and scaffolds; and how we shall reward the honest workers and fill the world with happy homes! These are the problems for the pulpits and congregations of an enlightened future. If Science cannot finally answer these questions, it is a vain and worthless thing.

The clergy, however, will continue to answer them in the old way, until their congregations are good enough to set

them free. They will still talk about believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, as though that were the only remedy for all human ills. They will still teach that retrogression is the only path that leads to light—that we must go back; that faith is the only sure guide; and that reason is a delusive glare, lighting only the road to eternal pain.

Until the clergy are free they cannot be intellectually honest. We can never tell what they really believe until they know that they can safely speak. They console themselves now by a secret resolution to be as liberal as they dare, with the hope that they can finally educate their congregations to the point of allowing them to think a little for themselves. They hardly know what they ought to do. The best part of their lives has been wasted in studying subjects of no possible value. Most of them are married, have families, and know but one way of making their living. Some of them say that, if they do not preach these foolish dogmas, others will, and that they may, through fear, after all, restrain mankind. Besides, they hate publicly to admit that they are mistaken, that the whole thing is a delusion, that the "scheme of salvation" is absurd, and that the Bible is no better than some other books, and worse than most.

You can hardly expect a bishop to leave his palace, or the Pope to vacate the Vatican. As long as people want popes, plenty of hypocrites will be found to take the place. And as long as labour fatigues, there will be found a good many men willing to preach once a week, if other folks will work and give them bread. In other words, while the demand lasts the supply will never fail.

If the people were a little more ignorant, astrology would flourish; if a little more enlightened, religion would perish!

II.—FREE SCHOOLS.

It is also my desire to free the schools. When a professor in a college finds a fact, he should make it known, even if it is inconsistent with something Moses

said. Public opinion must not compel the professor to hide a fact, and, "like the base Indian, throw the pearl away." With the single exception of Cornell, there is not a college in the United States where truth has ever been a welcome guest. The moment one of the teachers denies the inspiration of the Bible, he is discharged. If he discovers a fact inconsistent with that book, so much the worse for the fact, and especially for the discoverer of the fact. He must not corrupt the minds of his pupils by demonstrations. He must beware of every truth that cannot in some way be made to harmonise with the superstitions of the Jews. Science has nothing in common with religion. Facts and miracles never did, and never will, agree. They are not in the least related. They are deadly foes. What has religion to do with facts? Nothing. Can there be Methodist mathematics, Catholic astronomy, Presbyterian geology, Baptist biology, or Episcopal botany? Why, then, should a sectarian college exist? Only that which somebody knows should be taught in our schools. We should not collect taxes to pay people for guessing. The common school is the bread of life for the people, and it should not be touched by the withering hand of superstition.

Our country will never be filled with great institutions of learning until there is an absolute divorce between Church and School. As long as the mutilated records of a barbarous people are placed by priests and professors above the reason of mankind, we shall reap but little benefit from church or school.

Instead of dismissing professors for finding something out, let us rather discharge those who do not. Let each teacher understand that investigation is not dangerous for him; that his bread is safe, no matter how much truth he may discover, and that his salary will not be reduced simply because he finds that the ancient Jews did not know the entire history of the world.

Besides, it is not fair to make the

Catholic support the Protestant school, nor is it just to collect taxes from infidels and atheists to support schools in which any system of religion is taught.

The sciences are not sectarian. People do not persecute each other on account of disagreements in mathematics. Families are not divided about botany, and astronomy does not even tend to make a man hate his father and mother. It is what people do not know that they persecute each other about. Science will bring, not a sword, but peace.

Just as long as religion has control of the schools science will be an outcast. Let us free our institutions of learning. Let us dedicate them to the science of eternal truth. Let us tell every teacher to ascertain all the facts he can—to give us light, to follow Nature, no matter where she leads; to be infinitely true to himself and us; to feel that he is without a chain, except the obligation to be honest; that he is bound by no books, by no creed, neither by the sayings of the dead nor of the living; that he is asked to look with his own eyes, to reason for himself without fear, to investigate in every possible direction, and to bring us the fruit of all his work.

At present a good many men engaged in scientific pursuits, and who have signally failed in gaining recognition among their fellows, are endeavouring to make reputations among the Churches by delivering weak and vapid lectures upon the "Harmony of Genesis and Geology." Like all hypocrites, these men overstate the case to such a degree, and so turn and pervert facts and words, that they succeed only in gaining the applause of other hypocrites like themselves. Among the great scientists they are regarded as generals regard sutlers who trade with both armies.

Surely the time must come when the wealth of the world will not be wasted in the propagation of ignorant creeds and miraculous mistakes. The time must come when churches and cathedrals will be dedicated to the use of man; when minister and priest will deem the

discoveries of the living of more importance than the errors of the dead; when the truths of Nature will outrank the "sacred" falsehoods of the past, and when a single fact will outweigh all the miracles of Holy Writ.

Who can over-estimate the progress of the world if all the money wasted in superstition could be used to enlighten, elevate, and civilise mankind?

When every church becomes a school, every cathedral a university, every clergyman a teacher, and all their hearers brave and honest thinkers, then, and not until then, will the dream of poet, patriot, philanthropist, and philosopher become a real and blessed truth.

III.—THE POLITICIANS.

I would like also to liberate the politician. At present the successful office-seeker is a good deal like the centre of the earth—he weighs nothing himself, but draws everything else to him. There are so many societies, so many churches, so many isms, that it is almost impossible for an independent man to succeed in a political career. Candidates are forced to pretend that they are Catholics with Protestant proclivities, or Christians with Liberal tendencies, or temperance men who now and then take a glass of wine, or that, although not members of any Church, their wives are, and that they subscribe liberally to all. The result of all this is that we reward hypocrisy and elect men entirely destitute of real principle; and this will never change until the people become grand enough to allow each other to do their own thinking.

Our Government should be entirely and purely secular. The religious views of a candidate should be kept entirely out of sight. He should not be compelled to give his opinion as to the inspiration of the Bible, the propriety of infant baptism, or the immaculate conception. All these things are private and personal. He should be allowed to settle such things for himself, and, should he decide contrary to the law and

will of God, let him settle the matter with God. The people ought to be wise enough to select as their officers men who know something of political affairs, who comprehend the present greatness, and clearly perceive the future grandeur of our country. If we were in a storm at sea, with deck wave-washed and masts strained and bent with storm, and it was necessary to reef the topsail, we certainly would not ask the brave sailor who volunteered to go aloft what his opinion was on the five points of Calvinism. Our Government has nothing to do with religion. It is neither Christian nor pagan—it is secular. But as long as the people persist in voting for or against men on account of their religious views, just so long will hypocrisy hold place and power. Just so long will the candidates crawl in the dust—hide their opinions, flatter those with whom they differ, pretend to agree with those whom they despise; and just so long will honest men be trampled under foot. Churches are becoming political organisations. Nearly every Catholic is a Democrat; nearly every Methodist in the North is a Republican.

It probably will not be long until the Churches will divide as sharply upon political as upon theological questions; and when that day comes, if there are not Liberals enough to hold the balance of power, this government will be destroyed. The liberty of man is not safe in the hands of any Church. Wherever the Bible and the sword are in partnership man is a slave.

All laws for the purpose of making man worship God are born of the same spirit that kindled the fires of the *auto-da-fé*,¹ and lovingly built the dungeons of the Inquisition. All laws defining and punishing blasphemy—making it a crime to give your honest ideas about the Bible, or to laugh at the ignorance of the ancient Jews, or to enjoy yourself

¹ Act of faith. A judicial act of the Inquisition, or the judgment it gave in order to condemn those whom it thought worthy of punishment for having infringed religious laws.

on the Sabbath, or to give your opinion of Jehovah, were passed by impudent bigots, and should be at once repealed by honest men. An infinite God ought to be able to protect himself, without going into partnership with State Legislatures. Certainly he ought not so to act that laws become necessary to keep him from being laughed at. No one thinks of protecting Shakespeare from ridicule by the threat of fine and imprisonment. It strikes me that God might write a book that would not necessarily excite the laughter of his children. In fact, I think it would be safe to say that a real God could produce a work that would excite the admiration of mankind. Surely politicians could be better employed than in passing laws to protect the literary reputation of the Jewish God.

IV.—MAN AND WOMAN.

Let us forget that we are Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, Presbyterians, or Freethinkers, and remember only that we are men and women. After all, *man* and *woman* are the highest possible titles. All other names belittle us, and show that we have, to a certain extent, given up our individuality, and have consented to wear the collar of authority—that we are followers. Throwing away these names, let us examine these questions not as partisans, but as human beings with hopes and fears in common.

We know that our opinions depend to a great degree upon our surroundings—upon race, country, and education. We are all the result of numberless conditions, and inherit vices and virtues, truths and prejudices. If we had been born in England, surrounded by wealth and clothed with power, most of us would have been Episcopalians, and believed in Church and State. We should have insisted that the people needed a religion, and that, not having intellect enough to provide one for themselves, it was our duty to find one for them, and then compel them to support it. We should have believed it indecent to officiate in a pulpit without wearing a

gown, and that prayers should be read from a book. Had we belonged to the lower classes, we might have been Dissenters, and protested against the mummeries of the High Church. Had we been born in Turkey, most of us would have been Mohammedans, and believed in the inspiration of the Koran. We should have believed that Mohammed actually visited heaven, and became acquainted with an angel by the name of Gabriel, who was so broad between the eyes that it required three hundred days for a very smart camel to travel the distance. If some men had denied this story, we should probably have denounced him as a dangerous person, one who was endeavouring to undermine the foundations of society, and to destroy all distinction between virtue and vice. We should have said to him: "What do you propose to give us in place of that angel? We cannot afford to give up an angel of that size for nothing." We should have insisted that the best and wisest men believed the Koran. We should have quoted from the works and letters of philosophers, generals, and sultans to show that the Koran was the best of books, and that Turkey was indebted to that book, and to that alone, for its greatness and prosperity. We should have asked that man whether he knew more than all the great minds of his country, whether he was so much wiser than his fathers? We should have pointed out to him the fact that thousands had been consoled in the hour of death by passages from the Koran; that they had died with glazed eyes brightened by visions of the heavenly harem, and gladly left this world of grief and tears. We should have regarded Christians as the vilest of men, and on all occasions we should have repeated, "There is but one God, and Mohammed is his prophet!"

So, if we had been born in India, we should in all probability have believed in the religion of that country. We should have regarded the old records as true and sacred, and looked upon a wandering priest as better than the men from whom

he begged and by whose labour he lived. We should have believed in a god with three heads instead of three gods with one head, as we do now.

Now and then someone says that the religion of his father and mother is good enough for him, and wonders why anybody should desire a better. Surely we are not bound to follow our parents in religion any more than in politics, science, or art. China has been petrified by the worship of ancestors. If our parents had been satisfied with the religion of theirs, we should be still less advanced than we are. If we are in any way bound by the belief of our fathers, the doctrine will hold good back to the first people who had a religion; and if this doctrine is true, we ought now to be believers in that first religion. In other words, we should all be barbarians. You cannot show real respect to your parents by perpetuating their errors. Good fathers and mothers wish their children to advance, to overcome obstacles which baffled them, and to correct the errors of their education. If you wish to reflect credit upon your parents, accomplish more than they did, solve problems that they could not understand, and build better than they knew. To sacrifice your manhood upon the grave of your father is an honour to neither. Why should a son who has examined a subject throw away his reason and adopt the views of his mother? Is not such a course dishonourable to both?

We must remember that this "ancestor" argument is as old at least as the second generation of men, that it has served no purpose except to enslave mankind, and results mostly from the fact that acquiescence is easier than investigation. This argument, pushed to its logical conclusion, would prevent the advance of all people whose parents were not Free-thinkers.

It is hard for many people to give up the religion in which they were born; to admit that their fathers were utterly mistaken, and the sacred records of their country are but collections of myths and fables.

But when we look for a moment at the world, we find that each nation has its "sacred records"—its religion and its ideas of worship. Certainly all cannot be right; and as it would require a lifetime to investigate the claims of these various systems, it is hardly fair to damn a man for ever simply because he happens to believe the wrong one. All these religions were produced by barbarians. Civilised nations have contented themselves with changing the religions of their barbaric ancestors, but they have made none. Nearly all these religions are intensely selfish. Each one was made by some contemptible little nation that regarded itself as of almost infinite importance, and looked upon the other nations as beneath the notice of their god. In all these countries it was a crime to deny the sacred records, to laugh at the priests, to speak disrespectfully of the gods, to fail to divide your substance with the lazy hypocrites who managed your affairs in the next world upon condition that you would support them in this. In the olden times these theological people who quartered themselves upon the honest and industrious were called soothsayers, seers, charmers, prophets, enchanters, sorcerers, wizards, astrologers, and impostors, but now they are known as clergymen.

We are no exception to the general rule, and consequently have our sacred books as well as the rest. Of course it is claimed by many of our people that our books are the only true ones, the only ones that the real God ever wrote, or had anything whatever to do with. They insist that all other sacred books were written by hypocrites and impostors; that the Jews were the only people that God ever had any personal intercourse with, and that all other prophets and seers were inspired only by impudence and mendacity. True, it seems somewhat strange that God should have chosen a barbarous and unknown people who had little or nothing to do with the other nations of the earth as his messengers to the rest of mankind.

It is not easy to account for an infinite God making people so low in the scale of intellect as to require a revelation. Neither is it easy to perceive why, if a revelation was necessary at all, it was made only to a few. Of course I know that it is extremely wicked to suggest these thoughts, and that ignorance is the only armour that can effectually protect you from the wrath of God. I am aware that investigators, with all their genius, never find the road to heaven; that those who look where they are going are sure to miss it, and that only those who voluntarily put out their eyes and implicitly depend upon blindness can surely keep the narrow path.

Whoever reads our sacred book is compelled to believe it, or suffer for ever the torments of the lost. We are told that we have the privilege of examining it for ourselves; but this privilege is only extended to us on the condition that we believe it, whether it appears reasonable or not. We may disagree with others as much as we please upon the meaning of all passages in the Bible, but we must not deny the truth of a single word. We must believe that the book is inspired. If we obey its every precept without believing in its inspiration, we shall be damned just as certainly as though we disobeyed its every word. We have no right to weigh it in the scales of reason—to test it by the laws of nature, or the facts of observation and experience. To do this, we are told, is to put ourselves above the Word of God, and sit in judgment on the works of our creator.

For my part, I cannot admit that belief is a voluntary thing. It seems to me that evidence, even in spite of ourselves, will have its weight, and that, whatever our wish may be, we are compelled to stand with fairness by the scales, and give the exact result. It will not do to say that we reject the Bible because we are wicked. Our wickedness must be ascertained, not from our belief, but from our acts.

I am told by the clergy that I ought

not to attack the Bible; that I am leading thousands to perdition and rendering certain the damnation of my own soul. They have had the kindness to advise me that, if my object is to make converts, I am pursuing the wrong course. They tell me to use gentler expressions and more cunning words. Do they really wish me to make more converts? If their advice is honest, they are traitors to their trust. If their advice is not honest, then they are unfair with me. Certainly they should wish me to pursue the course that will make the fewest converts, and yet they pretend to tell me how my influence could be increased. It may be that upon this principle John Bright advised America to adopt Free Trade, so that our country might become a successful rival of Great Britain. Sometimes I think that even ministers are not entirely candid.

Notwithstanding the advice of the clergy, I have concluded to pursue my own course, to tell my honest thoughts, and to have my freedom in this world, whatever my fate may be in the next.

The real oppressor, enslaver, and corrupter of the people is the Bible. That book is the chain that binds, the dungeon that holds the clergy. That book spreads the pall of superstition over the colleges and schools. That book puts out the eyes of science, and makes honest investigation a crime. That book unmans the politician, and degrades the people. That book fills the world with bigotry, hypocrisy, and fear. It plays the same part in our country that has been played by "sacred records" in all the nations of the world.

A little while ago I saw one of the Bibles of the Middle Ages. It was about two feet in length, and one and a-half in width. It had immense oaken covers with hasps and clasps and hinges large enough almost for the doors of a penitentiary. It was covered with pictures of winged angels and aureoled saints. In my imagination I saw this book carried to the cathedral altar in solemn pomp—heard the chant of robed

and kneeling priests, felt the strange tremor of the organ's peal; saw the coloured light streaming through windows stained and touched by blood and flame—the swinging censer with its perfumed incense rising to the mighty roof, dim with height and rich with legend carved in stone, while on the walls was hung, written in light and shade, and all the colours that can tell of joy and tears, the pictured history of the martyred Christ. The people fell upon their knees. The book was opened, and the priest read the messages from God to man. To the multitude the book itself was evidence enough that it was not the work of human hands. How could those little marks and lines and dots contain, like tombs, the thoughts of men, and how could they, touched by a ray of light from human eyes, give up their dead? How could these characters span the vast chasm dividing the present from the past, and make it possible for the living still to hear the voices of the dead?

V.—THE PENTATEUCH.

The first five books in our Bible are known as the Pentateuch. For a long time it was supposed that Moses was the author, and among the ignorant the supposition still prevails. As a matter of fact, it seems to be well settled that Moses had nothing to do with these books, and that they were not written until he had been dust and ashes for hundreds of years. But, as all the Churches still insist that he was the author, that he wrote even an account of his own death and burial, let us speak of him as though these books were in fact written by him. As the Christians maintain that God was the real author, it makes but little difference whom he employed as his pen or clerk.

Nearly all authors of sacred books have given an account of the creation of the universe, the origin of matter, and the destiny of the human race. Nearly all have pointed out the obligation that man is under to his Creator for having placed him upon the earth, and allowed

him to live and suffer, and have taught that nothing short of the most abject worship could possibly compensate God for his trouble and labour suffered and done for the good of man. They have nearly all insisted that we should thank God for all that is good in life; but they have not all informed us as to whom we should hold responsible for the evils we endure.

Moses differed from most of the makers of sacred books by his failure to say anything of a future life, by failing to promise heaven and to threaten hell. Upon the subject of a future state there is not one word in the Pentateuch. Probably at that early day God did not deem it important to make a revelation as to the eternal destiny of man. He seems to have thought that he could control the Jews, at least, by rewards and punishments in this world, and so he kept the frightful realities of eternal joy and torment a profound secret from the people of his choice. He thought it far more important to tell the Jews their origin than to enlighten them as to their destiny.

We must remember that every tribe and nation has some way in which the more striking phenomena of nature are accounted for. These accounts are handed down by tradition, changed by numberless narrators as intelligence increases, or to account for newly-discovered facts, or for the purpose of satisfying the appetite for the marvellous.

The way in which a tribe or nation accounts for day and night, the change of seasons, the fall of snow and rain, the flight of birds, the origin of the rainbow, the peculiarities of animals, the dreams of sleep, the visions of the insane, the existence of earthquakes, volcanoes, storms, lightning, and the thousand things that attract the attention and excite the wonder, fear, or admiration of mankind, may be called the philosophy of that tribe or nation. And as all phenomena are, by savage and barbaric man, accounted for as the action of intelligent beings for the accomplishment of

certain objects, and as these beings were supposed to have the power to assist or injure man, certain things were supposed necessary for man to do in order to gain the assistance and avoid the anger of these gods. Out of this belief grew certain ceremonies; and these ceremonies, united with the belief, formed religion; and consequently every religion has for its foundation a misconception of the cause of phenomena.

All worship is necessarily based upon the belief that some being exists who can, if he will, change the natural order of events. The savage prays to a stone that he calls a god, while the Christian prays to a god that he calls a spirit; and the prayers of both are equally useful. The savage and the Christian put behind the universe an intelligent cause, and this cause, whether represented by one god or many, has been in all ages the object of all worship. To carry a fetish, or utter a prayer, to count beads, to abstain from food, to sacrifice a lamb, a child, or an enemy, are simply different ways by which the accomplishment of the same object is sought, and are all the offspring of the same error.

Many systems of religion must have existed many ages before the art of writing was discovered, and must have passed through many changes before the stories, miracles, histories, prophecies, and mistakes became fixed and petrified in written words. After that, change was possible only by giving new meanings to old words—a process rendered necessary by the continual acquisition of facts somewhat inconsistent with a literal interpretation of the “sacred records.” In this way an honest faith often prolongs its life by dishonest methods; and in this way the Christians of to-day are trying to harmonise the Mosaic account of creation with the theories and discoveries of modern science.

Admitting that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, or that he gave to the Jews a religion, the question arises as to where he obtained his information. We are told by the theologians that he

received his knowledge from God, and that every word he wrote was and is the exact truth. It is admitted at the same time that he was an adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, and enjoyed the rank and privilege of a prince. Under such circumstances, he must have been well acquainted with the literature, philosophy, and religion of the Egyptians, and must have known what they believed and taught as to the creation of the world.

Now, if the account of the origin of this earth as given by Moses is substantially like that given by the Egyptians, then we must conclude that he learned it from them. Should we imagine that he was divinely inspired because he gave to the Jews what the Egyptians had given him?

The Egyptian priests taught, *first*, that a god created the original matter, leaving it in a state of chaos; *second*, that a god moulded it into form; *third*, that the breath of a god moved upon the face of the deep; *fourth*, that a god created simply by saying “Let it be”; *fifth*, that a god created light before the sun existed.

Nothing can be clearer than that Moses received from the Egyptians the principal parts of his narrative, making such changes and additions as were necessary to satisfy the peculiar superstitions of his own people.

If some man at the present day should assert that he had received from God the theories of evolution, the survival of the fittest, and the law of heredity, and we should afterwards find that he was not only an Englishman, but had lived in the family of Charles Darwin, we certainly should account for his having these theories in a natural way. So, if Darwin himself should pretend that he was inspired, and had obtained his peculiar theories from God, we should probably reply that his grandfather suggested the same ideas, and that Lamarck published substantially the same theories the same year that Darwin was born.

Now, if we have sufficient courage, we shall, by the same course of reasoning,

account for the story of creation found in the Bible. We shall say that it contains the belief of Moses, and that he received his information from the Egyptians, and not from God. If we take the account as the absolute truth, and use it for the purpose of determining the value of modern thought, scientific advancement becomes impossible. And even if the account of the creation as given by Moses should turn out to be true, and should be so admitted by all the scientific world, the claim that he was inspired would still be without the least particle of truth. We should be forced to admit that he knew more than we had supposed. It is certainly no proof that a man is inspired simply because he is right.

No one pretends that Shakespeare was inspired, and yet all the writers of the books of the Old Testament put together could not have produced *Hamlet*.

Why should we, looking upon some rough and awkward thing, or god in stone, say that it must have been produced by some inspired sculptor, and with the same breath pronounce the *Venus de Milo* to be the work of man? Why should we, looking at some ancient daub of angel, saint, or virgin, say its painter must have been assisted by a god?

Let us account for all we see by the facts we know. If there are things for which we cannot account, let us wait for light. To account for anything by supernatural agencies is, in fact, to say that we do not know. Theology is not what we know about God, but what we do not know about Nature. In order to increase our respect for the Bible, it became necessary for the priests to exalt and extol that book, and at the same time to decry and belittle the reasoning powers of man. The whole power of the pulpit has been used for hundreds of years to destroy the confidence of man in himself—to induce him to distrust his own powers of thought, to believe that he was wholly unable to decide any

question for himself, and that all human virtue consists in faith and obedience. The Church has said: "Believe and obey! If you reason, you will become an unbeliever, and unbelievers will be lost. If you disobey, you will do so through vain pride and curiosity, and will, like Adam and Eve, be thrust from paradise for ever!"

For my part, I care nothing for what the Church says, except in so far as it accords with my reason; and the Bible is nothing to me, only in far as it agrees with what I think or know.

All books should be examined in the same spirit, and truth should be welcomed and falsehood exposed, no matter in what volume they may be found. Let us in this spirit examine the Pentateuch, and if anything appears unreasonable, contradictory, or absurd, let us have the honesty and courage to admit it. Certainly no good can result either from deceiving ourselves or others. Many millions have implicitly believed this book, and have just as implicitly believed that polygamy was sanctioned by God. Millions have regarded this book as the foundation of all human progress, and at the same time looked upon slavery as a divine institution. Millions have declared this book to have been infinitely holy, and, to prove that they were right, have imprisoned, robbed, and burned their fellow men. The inspiration of this book has been established by famine, sword, and fire; by dungeon, chain, and whip; by dagger and by rack; by force and fear and fraud; and generations have been bribed by threats of hell and promises of heaven.

Let us examine a portion of this book, not in the darkness of our fear, but in the light of reason.

And, first, let us examine the account given of the creation of this world, commenced, according to the Bible, on Monday morning, about five thousand eight hundred and eighty-three years ago.

VI.—MONDAY.

Moses commences his story by telling us that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. If this means anything, it means that God produced, caused to exist, called into being, the heaven and the earth. It will not do to say that he formed the heaven and the earth of previously existing matter. Moses conveys, and intended to convey, the idea that the matter of which the heaven and the earth are composed was created.

It is impossible for me to conceive of something being created from nothing. Nothing, regarded in the light of a raw material, is a decided failure. I cannot conceive of matter apart from force. Neither is it possible to think of force disconnected from matter. You cannot imagine matter going back to absolute nothing. Neither can you imagine nothing being changed into something. You may be eternally damned if you do not say that you can conceive these things; but you cannot conceive them. Such is the constitution of the human mind that it even cannot think of a commencement or an end of matter or force.

If God created the universe, there was a time when he commenced to create. Back of that commencement there must have been an eternity. In that eternity what was this God doing? He certainly did not think. There was nothing to think about. He did not remember. Nothing had ever happened. What did he do? Can you imagine anything more absurd than an infinite intelligence in infinite nothing wasting an eternity?

I do not pretend to tell how all these things really are; but I do insist that a statement that cannot possibly be comprehended by any human being, and that appears utterly impossible, repugnant to every fact of experience, and contrary to everything that we really know, must be rejected by every honest man.

We can conceive of eternity, because we cannot conceive of a cessation of time. We can conceive of infinite space,

because we cannot conceive of so much matter that our imagination will not stand upon the farthest star, and see infinite space beyond. In other words, we cannot conceive of a cessation of time; therefore, eternity is a necessity of the mind. Eternity sustains the same relation to time that space does to matter.

In the time of Moses it was perfectly safe for him to write an account of the creation of the world. He had simply to put in form the crude notions of the people. At that time no other Jew could have written a better account. Upon that subject he felt at liberty to give his imagination full play. There was no one who could authoritatively contradict anything he might say. It was substantially the same story that had been imprinted in curious characters upon the clay records of Babylon, the gigantic monuments of Egypt, and the gloomy temples of India. In those days there was an almost infinite difference between the educated and ignorant. The people were controlled almost entirely by signs and wonders. By the lever of fear priests moved the world. The sacred records were made and kept and altered by them. The people could not read, and looked upon one who could as almost a god. In our day it is hard to conceive of the influence of an educated class in a barbarous age. It was only necessary to produce the "sacred record," and ignorance fell upon its face. The people were taught that the record was inspired, and therefore true. They were not taught that it was true, and therefore inspired.

After all, the real question is not whether the Bible is inspired, but whether it is true. If it is true, it does not need to be inspired. If it is true, it makes no difference whether it was written by a man or a God. The multiplication table is just as useful, just as true, as though God had arranged the figures himself. If the Bible is really true, the claim of inspiration need not be urged; and if it

is not true, its inspiration can hardly be established. As a matter of fact, the truth does not need to be inspired. Nothing needs inspiration except a falsehood or a mistake. Where truth ends, where probability stops, inspiration begins. A fact never went into partnership with a miracle. Truth does not need the assistance of miracle. A fact will fit every other fact in the universe, because it is the product of all other facts. A lie will fit nothing except another lie made for the express purpose of fitting it. After a while the man gets tired of lying, and then the last lie will not fit the next fact, and then there is an opportunity to use a miracle. Just at that point it is necessary to have a little inspiration.

It seems to me that reason is the highest attribute of man, and that, if there can be any communication from God to man, it must be addressed to his reason. It does not seem possible that in order to understand a message from God it is absolutely essential to throw our reason away. How could God make known his will to any being destitute of reason? How can any man accept as a revelation from God that which is unreasonable to him? God cannot make a revelation to another man for me. He must make it to me, and until he convinces my reason that it is true I cannot receive it.

The statement that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth I cannot accept. It is contrary to my reason, and I cannot believe it. It appears reasonable to me that force has existed from eternity. Force cannot, as it appears to me, exist apart from matter. Force, in its nature, is for ever active, and without matter it could not act; and so I think matter must have existed for ever. To conceive of matter without force, or of force without matter, or of a time when neither existed, or of a being who existed for an eternity without either, and who out of nothing created both, is to me utterly impossible. I may be damned on this account, but I cannot

help it. In my judgment, Moses was mistaken.

It will not do to say that Moses merely intended to tell what God did in making the heavens and the earth out of matter then in existence. He distinctly says that in the *beginning* God created them. If this account is true, we must believe that God, existing in infinite space surrounded by eternal nothing, naught and void, created, produced, called into being, willed into existence, this universe of countless stars.

The next thing we are told by this inspired gentleman is that God created light, and proceeded to divide it from the darkness. Certainly the person who wrote this believed that darkness was a thing, an entity, a material that could get mixed and tangled up with light, and that these entities, light and darkness, had to be separated. In his imagination he probably saw God throwing pieces and chunks of darkness on one side and rays and beams of light on the other. It is hard for a man who has been born but once to understand these things. For my part, I cannot understand how light can be separated from darkness. I had always supposed that darkness was simply the absence of light, and that under no circumstances could it be necessary to take the darkness away from the light. It is certain, however, that Moses believed darkness to be a form of matter, because I find that in another place he speaks of a darkness that could be felt. They used to have on exhibition at Rome a bottle of the darkness that overspread Egypt.

You cannot divide light from darkness, any more than you can divide heat from cold. Cold is an absence of heat, and darkness is an absence of light. I suppose that we have no conception of absolute cold. We know only degrees of heat. Twenty degrees below zero is just twenty degrees warmer than forty degrees below zero. Neither cold nor darkness is an entity, and the two words express simply either the absolute or partial absence of heat or light. I

cannot conceive how light can be divided from darkness, but I can conceive how a barbarian several thousand years ago, writing upon a subject about which he knew nothing, could make a mistake. The creator of light could not have written in this way. If such a being exists, he must have known the nature of that "mode of motion" that paints the earth on every eye, and clothes in garments seven-hued this universe of worlds.

VII.—TUESDAY.

We are next informed by Moses that "God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters"; and that "God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament."

What did the writer mean by the word "firmament"? Theologians now tell us that he meant an "expanse." This will not do. How could an expanse divide the waters from the waters, so that the waters above the expanse would not fall into and mingle with the waters below the expanse? The truth is that Moses regarded the firmament as a solid affair. It was where God lived, and where water was kept. It was for this reason that they used to pray for rain. They supposed that some angel could with a lever raise a gate and let out the quantity of moisture desired. It was with the water from this firmament that the world was drowned when the windows of heaven were opened. It was in this firmament that the sons of God lived—the sons who "saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of all which they chose." The issue of such marriages were giants, and "the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."

Nothing is clearer than that Moses regarded the firmament as a vast material division that separated the waters of the world, and upon whose floor God lived, surrounded by his sons. In no other way could he account for rain.

Where did the water come from? He knew nothing about the laws of evaporation. He did not know that the sun wooed with amorous kisses the waves of the sea, and that they, clad in glorified mist rising to meet their lover, were, by disappointment, changed to tears, and fell as rain.

The idea that the firmament was the abode of the Deity must have been in the mind of Moses when he related the dream of Jacob. "And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord God."

So, when the people were building the tower of Babel, "the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them which they imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

The man who wrote that absurd account must have believed that God lived above the earth, in the firmament. The same idea was in the mind of the Psalmist when he said that God "bowed the heavens and came down."

Of course, God could easily remove any person bodily to heaven, as it was but a little way above the earth. "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." The accounts in the Bible of the ascension of Elijah, Christ, and St. Paul were born of the belief that the firmament was the dwelling-place of God. It probably never occurred to these writers that, if the firmament was seventy or eighty miles away, Enoch and the rest would have been frozen perfectly stiff long before the journey could have been completed. Possibly Elijah might have made the voyage, as he was carried to heaven in a chariot of fire "by a whirlwind."

The truth is that Moses was mistaken, and upon that mistake the Christians located their heaven and their hell. The telescope destroyed the firmament, did away with the heaven of the New Testament, rendered the ascension of our Lord and the assumption of his mother infinitely absurd, crumbled to chaos the gates and palaces of the New Jerusalem, and in their places gave to man a wilderness of worlds.

VIII.—WEDNESDAY.

We are next informed by the historian of creation that after God had finished making the firmament, and had succeeded in dividing the waters by means of an "expanse," he proceeded to gather the waters on the earth together in seas so that the dry land might appear.

Certainly the writer of this did not have any conception of the real form of the earth. He could not have known anything of the attraction of gravitation. He must have regarded the earth as flat, and supposed that it required considerable force and power to induce the water to leave the mountains and collect in the valleys. Just as soon as the water was forced to run down hill, the dry land appeared, and the grass began to grow and the mountains of green were thrown over the shoulders of the hills, and the trees laughed into bud and blossom, and the branches were laden with fruit. And all this happened before a ray had left the quiver of the sun, before a glittering beam had thrilled the bosom of a flower, and before the Dawn with trembling hands had drawn aside the curtains of the East and welcomed to her arms the eager god of Day.

It does not seem to me that grass and trees could grow and ripen into seed and fruit without the sun. According to the account, this all happened on the third day. Now, if, as the Christians say, Moses did not mean by the word "day" a period of twenty-four hours, but an immense and almost measureless space of time, and as God did not, according

to this view, make any animals until the fifth day—that is, not for millions of years after he made the grass and trees—for what purpose did he cause the trees to bear fruit?

Moses says that God said on the third day, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit whose seed was in itself after his kind; and God saw that it was good, and the evening and the morning were the third day."

There was nothing to eat this fruit; not an insect with painted wings sought the honey of the flowers; not a single living breathing thing upon the earth. Plenty of grass, a great variety of herbs, an abundance of fruit, but not a mouth in all the world. If Moses is right, this state of things lasted only two days; but if the modern theologians are correct, it continued for millions of ages.

"It is now well known that the organic history of the earth can be properly divided into five epochs—the Primordial, Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, and Quaternary. Each of these epochs is characterised by animal and vegetable life peculiar to itself. In the FIRST will be found Algæ and skull-less Vertebrates; in the SECOND, Ferns and Fishes; in the THIRD, Pine Forests and Reptiles; in the FOURTH, Foliaceous Forests and Mammals; and in the FIFTH, Man."

How much more reasonable this is than the idea that the earth was covered with grass and herbs and trees loaded with fruit for millions of years before an animal existed.

There is, in Nature, an even balance for ever kept between the total amounts of animal and vegetable life. "In her wonderful economy she must form and bountifully nourish her vegetable progeny—twin-brother life to her—with that of animals. The perfect balance between plant existences and animal existences must always be maintained while matter

courses through the internal circle, becoming each in turn. If an animal be resolved into its ultimate constituents in a period according to the surrounding circumstances, say, of four hours, of four months, of four years, or even of four thousand years—for it is impossible to deny that there may be instances of all these periods during which the process has continued—those elements which assume the gaseous form mingle at once with the atmosphere, and are taken up from it without delay by the ever-open mouths of vegetable life. By a thousand pores in every leaf the carbonic acid which renders the atmosphere unfit for animal life is absorbed, the carbon being separated and assimilated to form the vegetable fibre, which, as wood, makes and furnishes our houses and ships, is burned for our warmth, or is stored up under pressure for coal. All this carbon has played its part, and many a part in its time, as animal existences from monad up to man. Our mahogany of to-day has been many negroes in its turn, and before the African existed was integral portions of many a generation of extinct species."

It seems reasonable to suppose that certain kinds of vegetation and certain kinds of animals should exist together, and that, as the character of the vegetation changed, a corresponding change would take place in the animal world. It may be that I am led to these conclusions by "total depravity," or that I lack the necessary humility of spirit to satisfactorily harmonise Haeckel and Moses; or that I am carried away by pride, blinded by reason, given over to hardness of heart that I might be damned; but I never can believe that the earth was covered with leaves, and buds, and flowers, and fruits, before the sun with glittering spear had driven back the hosts of night.

IX.—THURSDAY.

After the world was covered with vegetation it occurred to Moses that it was about time to make a sun and moon;

and so we are told that on the fourth day God said, "Let there be light in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth; and it was so. And God made two great lights—the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also."

Can we believe that the inspired writer had any idea of the size of the sun? Draw a circle five inches in diameter, and by its side thrust a pin through the paper. The hole made by the pin will sustain about the same relation to the circle that the earth does to the sun. Did he know that the sun was eight hundred and sixty thousand miles in diameter; that it was enveloped in an ocean of fire thousands of miles in depth, hotter even than the Christian's hell, over which sweep tempests of flame moving at the rate of one hundred miles a second, compared with which the wildest storm that ever wrecked the forests of this world was but a calm? Did he know that the sun, every moment of time, throws out as much heat as could be generated by the combustion of eleven thousand millions of tons of coal? Did he know that the volume of the earth is less than one-millionth of that of the sun? Did he know of the one hundred and four planets belonging to our solar system, all children of the sun? Did he know of Jupiter, eighty-five thousand miles in diameter, hundreds of times as large as our earth, turning on his axis at the rate of twenty-five thousand miles an hour, accompanied by four moons, making the tour of his orbit in fifty years, at a distance of three thousand million miles? Did he know anything about Saturn, his rings and his eight moons? Did he have the faintest idea that all these planets were once a part of the sun; that the vast luminary was once thousands of millions of miles in diameter; that Neptune, Uranus, Saturn,

Jupiter, and Mars were all born before our earth; and that by no possibility could this world have existed three days, nor three periods, nor three "good whiles," before its source, the sun?

Moses supposed the sun to be about three or four feet in diameter, and the moon about half that size. Compared with the earth, they were but simple specks. This idea seems to have been shared by all the "inspired" men. We find in the book of Joshua that the sun stood still, and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. "So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day."

We are told that the sacred writer wrote in common speech, as we do when we talk about the rising and the setting of the sun, and that all he intended to say was that the earth ceased to turn on its axis "for about a whole day."

My own opinion is that General Joshua knew no more about the motions of the earth than he did about mercy and justice. If he had known that the earth turned upon its axis at the rate of a thousand miles an hour, and swept in its course about the sun at the rate of sixty-eight thousand miles an hour, he would have doubled the hailstones, spoken of in the same chapter, that the Lord cast down from heaven, and allowed the sun and moon to rise and set in the usual way.

It is impossible to conceive of a more absurd story than this about the stopping of the sun and moon, and yet nothing so excites the malice of the orthodox preacher as to call its truth in question. Some endeavour to account for the phenomenon by natural causes, while others attempt to show that God could by the refraction of light have made the sun visible although actually shining on the opposite side of the earth. The last hypothesis has been seriously urged by ministers within the last few months. The Rev. Henry M. Morey, of South Reud, Indiana, says "that the phenomenon was simply optical. The rotary

motion of the earth was not disturbed, but the light of the sun was prolonged by the same laws of refraction and reflection by which the sun now appears to be above the horizon when it is really below. The medium through which the sun's rays passed may have been miraculously influenced so as to have caused the sun to linger above the horizon long after its usual time for disappearance."

This is the latest and ripest product of Christian scholarship upon this question, no doubt; but still it is not entirely satisfactory to me. According to the sacred account, the sun did not linger merely above the horizon, but "stood still in the midst of heaven" for "about a whole day"—that is to say, for about twelve hours. If the air was miraculously changed so that it would refract the rays of the sun while the earth turned over as usual for "about a whole day," then at the end of that time the sun must have been visible in the east—that is, it must by that time have been the next morning. According to this, that most wonderful day must have been at least thirty-six hours in length. We have, first, the twelve hours of natural light, then twelve hours of "refracted and reflected" light. By that time it would again be morning, and the sun would shine for twelve hours more in the natural way, making thirty-six hours in all.

If the Rev. Morey would depend a little less on "refraction" and a little more on "reflection," he would conclude that the whole story is simply a barbaric myth and fable.

It hardly seems reasonable that God, if there is one, would either stop the globe, or change the constitution of the atmosphere or the nature of light, simply to afford Joshua an opportunity to kill people on that day, when he could just as easily have waited until the next morning. It certainly cannot be very gratifying to God for us to believe such childish things.

It has been demonstrated that force is eternal, that it is for ever active, and

eludes destruction by change of form. Motion is a form of force, and all arrested motion changes instantly to heat. The earth turns upon its axis at about one thousand miles an hour. Let it be stopped, and a force beyond our imagination is changed to heat. It has been calculated that to stop the world would produce as much heat as the burning of a solid piece of coal three times the size of the earth. And yet we are asked to believe that this was done in order that one barbarian might defeat another. Such stories never would have been written had not the belief been general that the heavenly bodies were as nothing compared with the earth.

The view of Moses was acquiesced in by the Jewish people and by the Christian world for thousands of years. It is supposed that Moses lived about fifteen hundred years before Christ, and, although he was "inspired" and obtained his information directly from God, he did not know as much about our solar system as the Chinese did a thousand years before he was born. "The Emperor Chwenhio adopted as an epoch a conjunction of the planets Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, which has been shown by M. Bailly to have occurred no less than 2,449 years before Christ." The ancient Chinese knew not only the motions of the planets, but they could calculate eclipses. "In the reign of the Emperor Chow-Kang the chief astronomers, Ho and Hi, were condemned to death for neglecting to announce a solar eclipse which took place 2,169 B.C.—a clear proof that the prediction of eclipses was a part of the duty of the imperial astronomers."

Is it not strange that a Chinaman should find out by his own exertions more about the material universe than Moses could when assisted by its Creator?

About eight hundred years after God gave Moses the principal facts about the creation of the "heaven and the earth" he performed another miracle far more wonderful than stopping the world. On

this occasion he not only stopped the earth, but actually caused it to turn the other way. A Jewish king was sick, and God, in order to convince him that he would ultimately recover, offered to make the shadow on the dial go forward or backward ten degrees. The king thought it was too easy a thing to make the shadow go forward, and asked that it be turned back. Thereupon "Isaiah the prophet cried unto the Lord, and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz." I hardly see how this miracle could be accounted for even by "refraction" and "reflection."

It seems from the account that this stupendous miracle was performed after the king had been cured. The account of the shadow going backward is given in the eleventh verse of the twentieth chapter of Second Kings; while the cure is given in the seventh verse of the same chapter. "And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered."

Stopping the world, and causing it to turn back ten degrees after that, seems to have been, as the boil was already cured by the figs, a useless display of power.

The easiest way to account for all these wonders is to say that the "inspired" writers were mistaken. In this way a fearful burden is lifted from the credulity of man, and he is left free to believe the evidences of his own senses and the demonstrations of science. In this way he can emancipate himself from the slavery of superstition, the control of the barbaric dead, and the despotism of the Church.

Only about a hundred years ago Buffon, the naturalist, was compelled by the faculty of theology at Paris to publicly renounce fourteen "errors" in his work on Natural History because they were at variance with the Mosaic account of creation. The Pentateuch is still the scientific standard of the Church, and ignorant priests, armed with that, pronounce sentence upon the vast accomplishments of modern thought.

X.—"HE MADE THE STARS ALSO."

Moses came very near forgetting about the stars, and only gave five words to all the hosts of heaven. Can it be possible that he knew anything about the stars beyond the mere fact that he saw them shining above him?

Did he know that the nearest star, the one we ought to be the best acquainted with, is twenty-one billion of miles away, and that it is a sun shining by its own light? Did he know of the next, that is thirty-seven billion miles distant? Is it possible that he was acquainted with Sirius, a sun two thousand six hundred and eighty-eight times larger than our own, surrounded by a system of heavenly bodies, several of which are already known, and distant from us eighty-two billion miles? Did he know that the Polar star, that tells the mariner his course and guided slaves to liberty and joy, is distant from this little world two hundred and ninety-two billion miles, and that Capella wheels and shires one hundred and thirty-three billion miles beyond? Did he know that it would require about seventy-two years for light to reach us from this star? Did he know that light travels one hundred and eighty-five thousand miles a second? Did he know that some stars are so far away in the infinite abysses that five millions of years are required for their light to reach this globe?

If this is true, and if, as the Bible tells us, the stars were made after the earth, then this world has been wheeling in its orbit for at least five million years.

It may be replied that it was not the intention of God to teach geology and astronomy. Then why did he say anything upon these subjects? And if he did say anything, why did he not give the facts?

According to the sacred records, God created on the first day the heaven and the earth, "moved upon the face of the waters," and made the light. On the second day he made the firmament, or the "expanse," and divided the waters. On the third day he gathered the waters

into seas, let the dry land appear, and caused the earth to bring forth grass, herbs, and fruit-trees; and on the fourth day he made the sun, moon, and stars, and set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth. This division of labour is very striking. The work of the other days is as nothing when compared with that of the fourth. Is it possible that it required the same time and labour to make the grass, herbs, and fruit-trees that it did to fill with countless constellations the infinite expanse of space?

XI.—FRIDAY.

We are then told that on the next day "God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth."

Is it true that while the dry land was covered with grass, and herbs, and trees bearing fruit, the ocean was absolutely devoid of life, and so remained for millions of years?

If Moses meant twenty-four hours by the word "day," then it would make but little difference on which of the six days animals were made; but if the word "day" was used to express millions of ages, during which life was slowly evolved from monad up to man, then the account becomes infinitely absurd, puerile, and foolish. There is not a scientist of high standing who will say that, in his judgment, the earth was covered with fruit-bearing trees before the monera—the ancestor, it may be, of the human race—felt in Laurentian seas the first, faint throb of life. Nor is there one who will declare that there was a single spire of grass before the sun had poured upon the world his flood of gold.

Why should men in the name of religion try to harmonise the contradictions that exist between Nature and a book? Why should philosophers be denounced for placing more reliance upon what they know than upon what they have been told? If there is a God, it is reasonably certain that he made the world; but it is by no means certain that he is the author of the Bible. Why, then, should we not place greater confidence in Nature than in a book? And even if this God made, not only the world, but the book besides, it does not follow that the book is the best part of creation, and the only part that we shall be eternally punished for denying. It seems to me that it is quite as important to know something of the solar system, something of the physical history of this globe, as it is to know the adventures of Jonah or the diet of Ezekiel. For my part, I would infinitely prefer to know all the results of scientific investigation than to be inspired as Moses was. Supposing the Bible to be true, why is it any worse or more wicked for Freethinkers to deny it than for priests to deny the doctrine of evolution or the dynamic theory of heat? Why should we be damned for laughing at Samson and his foxes, while others holding the nebular hypothesis in utter contempt go straight to heaven? It seems to me that a belief in the great truths of science is fully as essential to salvation as the creed of any Church. We are taught that a man may be perfectly acceptable to God even if he denies the rotundity of the earth, the Copernican system, the three laws of Kepler, the indestructibility of matter, and the attraction of gravitation. And we are also taught that a man may be right upon all these questions, and yet, for failing to believe in the "scheme of salvation," be eternally lost.

XII.—SATURDAY.

On this, the last day of creation, God said: "Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God

made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind; and God saw that it was good."

Now, is it true that the seas were filled with fish, the sky with fowls, and the earth covered with grass, and herbs, and fruit-bearing trees, millions of ages before there was a creeping thing in existence? Must we admit that plants and animals were the result of the fiat of some incomprehensible intelligence independent of the operation of what are known as natural causes? Why is a miracle any more necessary to account for yesterday than for to-day or for to-morrow?

If there is an infinite Power, nothing can be more certain than that this Power works in accordance with what we call law—that is, by and through natural causes. If anything can be found without a pedigree of natural antecedents, it will then be time enough to talk about the fiat of creation. There must have been a time when plants and animals did not exist upon this globe. The question, and the only question, is whether they were naturally produced. If the account given by Moses is true, then the vegetable and animal existences are the result of certain special fiats of creation entirely independent of the operation of natural causes. This is so grossly improbable, so at variance with the experience and observation of mankind, that it cannot be adopted without abandoning for ever the basis of scientific thought and action.

It may be urged that we do not understand the sacred record correctly. To this it may be replied that for thousands of years the account of the creation has, by the Jewish and Christian world, been regarded as literally true. If it was inspired, of course God must have known just how it would be understood, and consequently must have intended that it should be understood just as he knew it would be. One man writing to another may mean one thing, and yet be

understood as meaning something else. Now, if the writer knew that he would be misunderstood, and also knew that he could use other words that would convey his real meaning, but did not, we should say that he used words on purpose to mislead, and was not an honest man.

If a being of infinite wisdom wrote the Bible, or caused it to be written, he must have known exactly how his words would be interpreted by all the world, and he must have intended to convey the very meaning that was conveyed. He must have known that by reading that book man would form erroneous views as to the shape, antiquity, and size of the world; that he would be misled as to the time and order of creation; that he would have the most childish and contemptible views of the Creator; that the "sacred word" would be used to support slavery and polygamy; that it would build dungeons for the good and light faggots to consume the brave, and therefore he must have intended that these results should follow. He also must have known that thousands and millions of men and women never could believe his Bible, and that the number of unbelievers would increase in the exact ratio of civilisation, and therefore he must have intended that result.

Let us understand this. An honest finite being uses the best words, in his judgment, to convey his meaning. This is the best he can do, because he cannot certainly know the exact effect of his words on others. But an infinite being must know not only the real meaning of the words, but the exact meaning they will convey to every reader and hearer. He must know every meaning that they are capable of conveying to every mind. He must also know what explanations must be made to prevent misconception. If an infinite being cannot, in making a revelation to man, use such words that every person to whom revelation is essential will understand distinctly what that revelation is, then a revelation from God through the instrumentality of language is impossible, or it is not essential that

all should understand it correctly. It may be urged that millions have not the capacity to understand a revelation, although expressed in the plainest words. To this it seems a sufficient reply to ask why a being of infinite power should create men so devoid of intelligence that he cannot by any means make known to them his will? We are told that it is exceedingly plain, and that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. This statement is refuted by the religious history of the Christian world. Every sect is a certificate that God has not plainly revealed his will to man. To each reader the Bible conveys a different meaning. About the meaning of this book, called a revelation, there have been ages of war, and centuries of sword and flame. If written by an infinite God, he must have known that these results must follow; and, thus knowing, he must be responsible for all.

Is it not infinitely more reasonable to say that this book is the work of man, that it is filled with mingled truth and error, with mistakes and facts, and reflects, too faithfully perhaps, the "very form and pressure" of its time?

If there are mistakes in the Bible, certainly they were made by man. If there is anything contrary to nature, it was written by man. If there is anything immoral, cruel, heartless, or infamous, it certainly was never written by a being worthy of the adoration of mankind.

XIII.—LET US MAKE MAN.

We are next informed by the author of the Pentateuch that God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," and that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

If this account means anything, it means that man was created in the physical image and likeness of God. Moses, while he speaks of man as having been made in the image of God, never speaks of God except as having the form

of a man. He speaks of God as "walking in the garden in the cool of the day"; and says that Adam and Eve "heard his voice." He is constantly telling what God said, and in a thousand passages he refers to him as not only having the human form, but as performing actions such as man performs. The God of Moses was a God with hands, with feet, with the organs of speech—a God of passion, of hatred, of revenge, of affection, of repentance—a God who made mistakes—in other words, an immense and powerful man.

It will not do to say that Moses meant to convey the idea that God made man in his mental or moral image. Some have insisted that man was made in the moral image of God because he was made pure. Purity cannot be manufactured. A moral character cannot be made for man by a God. Every man must make his own moral character. Consequently, if God is infinitely pure, Adam and Eve were not made in his image in that respect. Others say that Adam and Eve were made in the mental image of God. If it is meant by that that they were created with reasoning powers like, but not to the extent of, those possessed by a god, then this may be admitted. But certainly this idea was not in the mind of Moses. He regarded the human form as being in the image of God, and for that reason always spoke of God as having that form. No one can read the Pentateuch without coming to the conclusion that the author supposed that man was created in the physical likeness of Deity. God said "Go to, let us go down." God "smelled a sweet savour"; God "repented" him that he had made man; "and God said," and "walked," and "talked," and "rested." All these expressions are inconsistent with any other idea than that the person using them regarded God as having the form of man.

As a matter of fact, it is impossible for a man to conceive of a personal God other than as a being having the human form. No one can think of an infinite

being having the form of a horse, or a bird, or of any animal beneath man. It is one of the necessities of the mind to associate forms with intellectual capacities. The highest form of which we have any conception is man's, and consequently his is the only form that we can find in imagination to give to a personal God, because all other forms are, in our minds, connected with lower intelligences.

It is impossible to think of a personal God as a spirit without form. We can use these words, but they do not convey to the mind any real and tangible meaning. Everyone who thinks of a personal God at all thinks of him as having the human form. Take from God the idea of form; speak of him simply as an all-pervading spirit—which means an all-pervading something about which we know nothing—and Pantheism is the result.

We are told that God made man; and the question naturally arises, How was this done? Was it by a process of "evolution," "development," the "transmission of acquired habits," the "survival of the fittest," or was the necessary amount of clay kneaded to the proper consistency, and then by the hands of God moulded into form? Modern science tells us that man has been evolved, through countless epochs, from the lowest forms; that he is the result of almost an infinite number of actions, reactions, experiences, states, forms, wants, and adaptations. Did Moses intend to convey such a meaning, or did he believe that God took a sufficient amount of dust, made it the proper shape, and breathed into it the breath of life? Can any believer in the Bible give any reasonable account of this process of creation? Is it possible to imagine what was really done? Is there any theologian who will contend that man was created directly from the earth? Will he say that man was made substantially as he now is, with all his muscles properly developed for walking and speaking, and performing every variety

of human action—that all his bones were formed as they now are, and all the relations of nerve, ligament, brain, and motion as they are to-day?

Looking back over the history of animal life from the lowest to the highest form, we find that there has been a slow and gradual development; a certain but constant relation between want and production; between use and form. The monera is said to be the simplest form of animal life that has yet been found. It has been described as “an organism without organs.” It is a kind of structureless structure; a little mass of transparent jelly that can flatten itself out, and can expand and contract around its food. It can feed without a mouth, digest without a stomach, walk without feet, and reproduce itself by simple division. By taking this monera as the commencement of animal life, or rather as the first animal, it is easy to follow the development of the organic structure through all the forms of life to man himself. In this way finally every muscle, bone, and joint, every organ, form, and function, may be accounted for. In this way, and in this way only, can the existence of rudimentary organs be explained. Blot from the human mind the ideas of evolution, heredity, adaptation, and the “survival of the fittest,” with which it has been enriched by Lamarck, Goethe, Darwin, Haeckel, and Spencer, and all the facts in the history of animal life become utterly disconnected and meaningless. Shall we throw away all that has been discovered with regard to organic life, and in its place take the statements of one who lived in the rude morning of a barbaric day? Will anybody now contend that man was a direct and independent creation, and bears no relation to the animals below him? Belief upon this subject must be governed at last by evidence. Man cannot believe as he pleases. He can control his speech, and can say that he believes or disbelieves; but, after all, his will cannot depress or raise the scales with which his reason finds the worth and weight of

facts. If this is not so, investigation, evidence, judgment, and reason are but empty words.

I ask again, How were Adam and Eve created? In one account they are created male and female, and apparently at the same time. In the next account Adam is made first, and Eve a long time afterwards, and from a part of the man. Did God, simply by his creative fiat, cause a rib slowly to expand, grow and divide into nerve, ligament, cartilage, and flesh? How was the woman created from a rib? How was man created simply from dust? For my part, I cannot believe this statement. I may suffer for this in the world to come; and may, millions of years hence, sincerely wish that I had never investigated the subject, but had been content to take the ideas of the dead. I do not believe that any deity works in that way. So far as my experience goes, there is an unbroken procession of cause and effect. Each thing is a necessary link in an infinite chain; and I cannot conceive of this chain being broken even for one instant. Back of the simplest monera there is a cause, and back of that another, and so on, it seems to me, forever. In my philosophy I postulate neither beginning nor ending.

If the Mosaic account is true, we know how long man has been upon this earth. If that account can be relied on, the first man was made about five thousand eight hundred and eighty-three years ago. Sixteen hundred and fifty-six years after the making of the first man the inhabitants of the world, with the exception of eight people, were destroyed by a flood. This flood occurred only about four thousand two hundred and twenty-seven years ago. If this account is correct, at that time only one kind of men existed. Noah and his family were certainly of the same blood. It therefore follows that all the differences we see between the various races of men have been caused in about four thousand years. If the account of the deluge is true, then since that event all the ancient kingdoms

of the earth were founded, and their inhabitants passed through all the stages of savage, nomadic, barbaric, and semi-civilised life; through the epochs of Stone, Bronze, and Iron; established commerce, cultivated the arts, built cities, filled them with palaces and temples, invented writing, produced a literature, and slowly fell to shapeless ruin. We must believe that all this has happened within a period of four thousand years.

From representations found upon Egyptian granite made more than three thousand years ago, we know that the negro was as black, his lips as full, and his hair as closely curled then as now. If we know anything, we know that there was at that time substantially the same difference between the Egyptian and the negro as now. If we know anything, we know that magnificent statues were made in Egypt four thousand years before our era—that is to say, about six thousand years ago. There was at the World's Exposition, in the Egyptian department, a statue of King Cephren known to have been chiselled more than six thousand years ago. In other words, if the Mosaic account must be believed, this statue was made before the world. We also know, if we know anything, that men lived in Europe with the hairy mammoth, the cave bear, the rhinoceros, and the hyena. Among the bones of those animals have been found the stone hatchets and flint arrows of our ancestors. In the caves where they lived have been discovered the remains of these animals that had been conquered, killed, and devoured as food hundreds of thousands of years ago.

If these facts are true, Moses was mistaken. For my part, I have infinitely more confidence in the discoveries of to-day than in the records of a barbarous people. It will not now do to say that man has existed upon this earth for only about six thousand years. One can hardly compute in his imagination the time necessary for man to emerge from the barbarous state, naked and helpless,

surrounded by animals far more powerful than he, to progress and finally create the civilisations of India, Egypt, and Athens. The distance from savagery to Shakespeare must be measured, not by hundreds, but by millions of years.

XIV.—SUNDAY.

"And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."

The great work had been accomplished—the world, the sun, and moon, and all the hosts of heaven were finished; the earth was clothed in green, the seas were filled with life, the cattle wandered by the brooks, insects with painted wings were in the happy air, Adam and Eve were making each other's acquaintance, and God was resting from his work. He was contemplating the achievements of a week.

Because he rested on that day he sanctified it, and for that reason, and for that alone, it was by the Jews considered a holy day. If he only rested on that day, there ought to be some account of what he did the following Monday. Did he rest on that day? What did he do after he got rested? Has he done anything in the way of creation since Saturday evening of the first week?

It is now claimed by the "scientific" Christians that the "days" of creation were not ordinary days of twenty-four hours each, but immensely long periods of time. If they are right, then how long was the seventh day? Was that, too, a geologic period covering thousands of ages? That cannot be, because Adam and Eve were created the Saturday evening before, and according to the Bible that was about five thousand eight hundred and eighty-three years ago. I cannot state the time exactly, because there have been as many as one hundred and forty different opinions given by learned Biblical students as to the time

between the creation of the world and the birth of Christ. We are quite certain, however, that, according to the Bible, it is not more than six thousand years since the creation of Adam. From this it would appear that the seventh day was not a geologic epoch, but was, in fact, a period of less than six thousand years, and probably of only twenty-four hours.

The theologians who "answer" these things may take their choice. If they take the ground that the "days" were periods of twenty-four hours, then geology will force them to throw away the whole account. If, on the other hand, they admit that the days were vast "periods," then the sacredness of the Sabbath must be given up.

There is found in the Bible no intimation that there was the least difference in the days. They are all spoken of in the same way. It may be replied that our translation is incorrect. If this be so, then only those who understand Hebrew have had a revelation from God, and all the rest have been deceived.

How is it possible to sanctify a space of time? Is rest holier than labour? If there is any difference between days, ought not that to be considered best in which the most useful labour has been performed?

Of all the superstitions of mankind, this insanity about the "sacred Sabbath" is the most absurd. The idea of feeling it a duty to be solemn and sad one-seventh of the time! To think that we can please an infinite being by staying in some dark and sombre room, instead of walking in the perfumed fields! Why should God hate to see a man happy? Why should it excite his wrath to see a family in the woods, by some babbling stream, talking, laughing, and loving? Nature works on that "sacred" day. The earth turns, the rivers run, the trees grow, the buds burst into flower, and birds fill the air with song. Why should we look sad and think about death, and hear about hell? Why should that day be filled with gloom instead of joy?

A poor mechanic, working all the week in dust and noise, needs a day of rest and joy, a day to visit stream and wood, a day to live with wife and child; a day in which to laugh at care, and gather hope and strength for toils to come. And his weary wife needs a breath of sunny air, away from street and wall, amid the hill, or by the margin of the sea, where she can sit and prattle with her babe, and fill with happy dreams the long, glad day.

The "Sabbath" was born of asceticism, hatred of human joy, fanaticism, ignorance, egotism of priests, and the cowardice of the people. This day, for thousands of years, has been dedicated to superstition, to the dissemination of mistakes, and the establishment of falsehoods. Every Freethinker, as a matter of duty, should violate this day. He should assert his independence, and do all within his power to wrest the Sabbath from the gloomy Church, and give it back to liberty and joy. Freethinkers should make the Sabbath a day of mirth and music—a day to spend with wife and child—a day of games, and books, and dreams—a day to put fresh flowers above our sleeping dead, a day of memory and hope, of love and rest.

Why should we in this age of the world be dominated by the dead? Why should barbarian Jews, who went down to death and dust three thousand years ago, control the living world? Why should we care for the superstition of men who began the Sabbath by paring their nails, "beginning at the fourth finger, then going to the second, then to the fifth, then to the third, and ending with the thumb"? How pleasing to God this must have been. The Jews were very careful of these nail parings. They who threw them upon the ground were wicked, because Satan used them to work evil upon the earth. They believed that upon the Sabbath souls were allowed to leave purgatory and cool their burning souls in water. Fires were neither allowed to be kindled nor extinguished, and upon that day it was

a sin to bind up wounds. "The lame might use a staff, but the blind could not." So strict was the Sabbath kept that at one time, "if a Jew on a journey was overtaken by the 'sacred day' in a wood, or on the highway, no matter where, nor under what circumstances, he must sit down," and there remain until the day was gone. "If he fell down in the dirt, there he was compelled to stay until the day was done." For violating the Sabbath the punishment was death, for nothing short of the offender's blood could satisfy the wrath of God. There are, in the Old Testament, two reasons given for abstaining from labour on the Sabbath—the resting of God and the redemption of the Jews from the bondage of Egypt.

Since the establishment of the Christian religion the day has been changed, and Christians do not regard the day as holy upon which God actually rested, and which he sanctified. The Christian Sabbath, or the "Lord's Day," was legally established by the murderer Constantine, because upon that day Christ was supposed to have risen from the dead.

It is not easy to see where Christians got the right to disregard the direct command of God, to labour on the day he sanctified, and keep as sacred a day upon which he commanded men to labour. The Sabbath of God is Saturday, and, if any day is to be kept holy, that is the one, and not the Sunday of the Christian.

Let us throw away these superstitions, and take the higher, nobler ground, that every day should be rendered sacred by some loving act, by increasing the happiness of man, giving birth to nobler thoughts, putting in the path of toil some flower of joy, helping the unfortunate, lifting the fallen, dispelling gloom, destroying prejudice, defending the helpless, and filling homes with light and love.

XV.—THE NECESSITY FOR A GOOD MEMORY.

It must not be forgotten that there are two accounts of the creation in Genesis. The first account stops with the third

verse of the second chapter. The chapters have been improperly divided. In the original Hebrew the Pentateuch was neither divided into chapters nor verses. There was not even any system of punctuation. It was written wholly with consonants, without vowels, and without any marks, dots, or lines to indicate them.

These accounts are materially different, and both cannot be true. Let us see wherein they differ.

The second account of the creation begins with the fourth verse of the second chapter, and is as follows:—

"These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

"And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew; for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.

"But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

"And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

"And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted and became four heads.

"The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;

"And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.

"And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

"And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward

the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat :

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it : for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone ; I will make him an helpmeet for him.

"And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air ; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them : and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

"And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and every beast of the field ; but for Adam there was not found an helpmeet for him.

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept ; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof ;

"And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh : she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife ; and they shall be one flesh.

"And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

Order of Creation in the First Account :

1. The heaven and the earth and light were made.

2. The firmament was constructed and the waters divided.

3. The waters were gathered into seas—and then came dry land, grass, herbs, and fruit trees.

4. The sun and the moon. He made the stars also.

5. Fishes, fowls, and great whales.

6. Beasts, cattle, and every creeping thing, man and woman.

Order of Creation in the Second Account :

1. The heavens and the earth.

2. A mist went up from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

3. Created a man out of dust, by the name of Adam.

4. Planted a garden eastward in Eden, and put the man in it.

5. Created the beasts and fowls.

6. Created a woman out of one of the man's ribs.

In the second account man was made *before* the beasts and fowls. If this is true, the first account is false. And if the theologians of our time are correct in their view that the Mosaic day means thousands of ages, then, according to the second account, Adam existed millions of years before Eve was formed. He must have lived one Mosaic day before there were any trees, and another Mosaic day before the beasts and fowls were created. Will some kind clergyman tell us upon what kind of food Adam subsisted during these immense periods?

In the second account a man is made, and the fact that he was without a helpmeet did not occur to the Lord God until a couple of "vast periods" afterwards. The Lord God, suddenly coming to an appreciation of the situation, said : "It is not good that the man should be alone ; I will make him an helpmeet for him."

Now, after concluding to make "an helpmeet" for Adam, what did the Lord God do? Did he at once proceed to make a woman? No. What did he do? He made the beasts, and tried to induce Adam to take one of them for "an helpmeet." If I am incorrect, read the following account, and tell me what it means :—

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone ; I will make him an helpmeet for him.

"And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every

fowl of the air ; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them : and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

"And Adam gave names to all the cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field ; but for Adam there was not found an helpmeet for him."

Unless the Lord God was looking for a helpmeet for Adam, why did he cause the animals to pass before him ? And why did he, after the menagerie had passed by, pathetically exclaim, "But for Adam there was not found an helpmeet for him" ?

It seems that Adam saw nothing that struck his fancy. The fairest ape, the sprightliest chimpanzee, the loveliest baboon, the most bewitching orang-outang, the most fascinating gorilla, failed to touch with love's sweet pain poor Adam's lonely heart. Let us rejoice that this was so. Had he fallen in love then, there never would have been a Freethinker in this world.

Dr. Adam Clark, speaking of this remarkable proceeding, says : "God caused the animals to pass before Adam to show him that no creature yet formed could make him a suitable companion ; that Adam was convinced that none of these animals could be a suitable companion for him, and that therefore he must continue in a state that was not good (celibacy) unless he became a further debtor to the bounty of his maker, for among all the animals which he had formed there was not a helpmeet for Adam."

Upon the same subject Dr. Scott informs us "that it was not conducive to the happiness of the man to remain without the consoling society and endearment of tender friendship, nor consistent with the end of his creation to be without marriage by which the earth might be replenished and worshippers and servants raised up to render him praise and glory. Adam seems to have been vastly better acquainted by intuition or revelation with the distinct properties of every creature than the most sagacious observer since

the fall of man. Upon this review of the animals, not one was found in outward form his counterpart, nor one suited to engage his affections, participate in his enjoyments, or associate with him in the worship of God."

Dr. Matthew Henry admits that "God brought all the animals together to see if there was a suitable match for Adam in any of the numerous families of the inferior creatures, but there was none. They were all looked over, but Adam could not be matched among them all. Therefore God created a new thing to be helpmeet for him."

Failing to satisfy Adam with any of the inferior animals, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon him, and while in this sleep took out one of Adam's ribs, and "closed up the flesh instead thereof." And out of this rib the Lord God made a woman, and brought her to the man.

Was the Lord God compelled to take a part of the man because he had used up all the original "nothing" out of which the universe was made ? Is it possible for any sane and intelligent man to believe this story ? Must a man be born a second time before this account seems reasonable ?

Imagine the Lord God with a bone in his hand with which to start a woman, trying to make up his mind whether to make a blonde or a brunette !

Just at this point it may be proper for me to warn all persons from laughing at, or making light of, any stories found in the "Holy Bible." When you come to die, every laugh will be a thorn in your pillow. At that solemn moment, as you look back upon the records of your life, no matter how many men you may have wrecked and ruined ; no matter how many women you have deceived and deserted ; all that can be forgiven ; but if you remember then that you have laughed at even one story in God's "sacred book," you will see through the gathering shadows of death the forked tongues of devils and the leering eyes of fiends.

These stories must be believed, or the

work of regeneration can never be commenced. No matter how well you act your part—live as honestly as you may, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, divide your last farthing with the poor—and you are simply travelling the broad road that leads inevitably to eternal death, unless at the same time you implicitly believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God.

Let me show you the result of unbelief. Let us suppose, for a moment, that we are at the Day of Judgment, listening to the trial of souls as they arrive. The Recording Secretary, or whoever does the cross-examining, says to a soul:—

Where are you from?—I am from the Earth.

What kind of a man were you?—Well, I don't like to talk about myself. I suppose you can tell by looking at your books.

No, sir. You must tell what kind of a man you were.—Well, I was what you might call a first-rate fellow. I loved my wife and children. My home was my heaven. My fireside was a paradise to me. To sit there and see the lights and shadows fall upon the faces of those I loved was to me a perfect joy.

How did you treat your family?—I never said an unkind word. I never caused my wife, nor one of my children, a moment's pain.

Did you pay your debts?—I did not owe a dollar when I died, and left enough to pay my funeral expenses, and to keep the fierce wolf of want from the door of those I loved.

Did you belong to any Church?—No, sir. They were too narrow, pinched, and bigoted for me; I never thought that I could be very happy if other folks were damned.

Did you believe in eternal punishment?—Well, no. I always thought that God could get his revenge in far less time.

Did you believe the rib story?—Do you mean the Adam and Eve business?

Yes. Did you believe that?—To tell

you the truth, that was just a little more than I could swallow.

Away with him to hell! Next.

Where are you from?—I am from the world, too.

Did you belong to any Church?—Yes, sir, and to the Young Men's Christian Association besides.

What was your business?—Cashier in a savings bank.

Did you ever run away with any money?—Where I came from a witness could not be compelled to criminate himself.

The law is different here. Answer the question. Did you run away with any money?—Ycs, sir.

How much?—One hundred thousand dollars.

Did you take anything else with you?—Yes, sir.

Well, what else?—I took my neighbour's wife—we sang together in the choir.

Did you have a wife and children of your own?—Yes, sir.

And you deserted them?—Yes, sir; but such was my confidence in God that I believed he would take care of them.

Have you heard of them since?—No, sir.

Did you believe in the rib story?—Bless your soul, of course I did. A thousand times I regretted that there were no harder stories in the Bible, so that I could have shown my wealth of faith.

Do you believe the rib story yet?—Yes, with all my heart.

Give him a harp.

Well, as I was saying, God made a woman from Adam's rib. Of course, I do not know exactly how this was done, but when he got the woman finished he presented her to Adam. He liked her, and they commenced housekeeping in the celebrated Garden of Eden.

Must we, in order to be good, gentle, and loving in our lives, believe that the creation of woman was a second thought? That Jehovah really endeavoured to

induce Adam to take one of the lower animals as a helpmeet for him? After all, is it not possible to live honest and courageous lives without believing these fables? It is said that from Mount Sinai God gave, amid thunderings and lightnings, ten commandments for the guidance of mankind; and yet among them is not—"Thou shalt believe the Bible."

XVI.—THE GARDEN.

In the first account we are told that God made man, male and female, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it."

In the second account only the man is made, and he is put in a garden "to dress it and to keep it." He is not told to subdue the earth, but to dress and keep a garden.

In the first account man is given every herb bearing seed upon the face of the earth and the fruit of every tree for food, and in the second he is given only the fruit of all the trees in the garden, with the exception "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," which was a deadly poison.

There was issuing from this garden a river that was parted into four heads. The first of these, Pison, compassed the whole land of Havilah; the second, Gihon, compassed the whole land of Ethiopia; the third, Hiddekel, flowed towards the east of Assyria; and the fourth was the Euphrates. Where are these four rivers now? The brave prow of discovery has visited every sea; the traveller has pressed with weary feet the soil of every clime; and yet there has been found no place from which four rivers sprang. The Euphrates still journeys to the gulf, but where are Pison, Gihon, and the mighty Hiddekel? Surely by going to the source of the Euphrates we ought to find either these three rivers or their ancient beds. Will some minister, when he answers the *Mistakes of Moses*, tell us where these rivers are or were? The maps of the world are incomplete without these

mighty streams. We have discovered the sources of the Nile; the North Pole will soon be touched by an American; but these three rivers still rise in unknown hills, still flow in unknown lands, and empty still in unknown seas.

The account of these four rivers is what the Rev. David Swing would call "a geographical poem." The orthodox clergy cover the whole affair with the blanket of allegory, while the "scientific" Christian folks talk about cataclysms, upheavals, earthquakes, and vast displacements of the earth's crust.

The question then arises, whether within the last six thousand years there have been such upheavals and displacements? Talk as you will about the vast "creative periods" that preceded the appearance of man; it is, according to the Bible, only about six thousand years since man was created. Moses gives us the generations of men from Adam until his day, and his account cannot be explained away by calling centuries days.

According to the second account of creation, these four rivers were made after the creation of man, and consequently they must have been obliterated by convulsions of Nature within six thousand years.

Can we not account for these contradictions, absurdities, and falsehoods by simply saying that, although the writer may have done his level best, he failed because he was limited in knowledge, led away by tradition, and depended too implicitly upon the correctness of his imagination? Is not such a course far more reasonable than to insist that all these things are true, and must stand though every science shall fall to mental dust?

Can any reason be given for not allowing man to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge? What kind of tree was that? If it is all an allegory, what truth is sought to be conveyed? Why should God object to that fruit being eaten by man? Why did he put it in the midst of the garden? There was

certainly plenty of room outside. If he wished to keep man and this tree apart, why did he put them together? And why, after he had eaten, was he thrust out? The only answer that we have a right to give is the one given in the Bible. "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken."

Will some minister, some graduate of Andover, tell us what this means? Are we bound to believe it without knowing what the meaning is? If it is a revelation, what does it reveal? Did God object to education, then, and does that account for the hostile attitude still assumed by theologians towards all scientific truth? Was there in the garden a tree of life, the eating of which would have rendered Adam and Eve immortal? Is it true that, after the Lord God drove them from the garden, he placed upon its eastern side "Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life"? Are the Cherubims and the flaming sword guarding that tree yet, or was it destroyed, or did its rotting trunk, as the Rev. Robert Collyer suggests, "nourish a bank of violets"?

What objection could God have had to the immortality of man? You see that, after all, this sacred record, instead of assuring us of immortality, shows us only how we lost it. In this there is assuredly but little consolation.

According to this story, we have lost one Eden, but nowhere in the Mosaic books are we told how we may gain another. I know that the Christians tell us there is another, in which all true believers will finally be gathered, and enjoy the unspeakable happiness of seeing the unbelievers in hell; but they do not tell us where it is.

Some commentators say that the Garden of Eden was in the third heaven,

some in the fourth, others have located it in the moon, some in the air beyond the attraction of the earth, some on the earth, some under the earth, some inside the earth, some at the North Pole, others at the South, some in Tartary, some in China, some on the borders of the Ganges, some in the island of Ceylon, some in Armenia, some in Africa, some under the equator, others in Mesopotamia, in Syria, Persia, Arabia, Babylon, Assyria, Palestine, and Europe. Others have contended that it was invisible, that it was an allegory, and must be spiritually understood.

But whether you understand these things or not, you must believe them. You may be laughed at in this world for insisting that God put Adam into a deep sleep and made a woman out of one of his ribs, but you will be crowned and glorified in the next. You will also have the pleasure of hearing the gentlemen howl there who laughed at you here. While you will not be permitted to take any revenge, you will be allowed to smilingly express your entire acquiescence in the will of God. But where is the new Eden? No one knows. The one was lost, and the other one has not been found.

Is it true that man was once perfectly pure and innocent, and that he became degenerate by disobedience? No. The real truth is, and the history of man shows, that he has advanced. Events, like the pendulum of a clock, have swung forward and backward; but, after all, man, like the hands, has gone steadily on. Man is growing grander. He is not degenerating. Nations and individuals fail and die, and make room for higher forms. The intellectual horizon of the world widens as the centuries pass. Ideals grow grander and purer; the difference between justice and mercy becomes less and less; liberty enlarges, and love intensifies as the years sweep on. The ages of force and fear, of cruelty and wrong, are behind us, and the real Eden is beyond. It is said that a desire for knowledge lost us the Eden

of the past ; but, whether that is true or not, it will certainly give us the Eden of the future.

XVII.—THE FALL.

We are told that the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field ; that he had a conversation with Eve, in which he gave his opinion about the effect of eating certain fruit ; that he assured her it was good to eat, that it was pleasant to the eye, that it would make her wise ; that she was induced to take some ; that she persuaded her husband to try it ; that God found it out ; that he then cursed the snake, condemning it to crawl and eat the dust ; that he multiplied the sorrows of Eve, cursed the ground for Adam's sake, started thistles and thorns, condemned man to eat the herb of the field in the sweat of his face, pronounced the curse of death, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," made coats of skins for Adam and Eve, and drove them out of Eden.

Who and what was this serpent ? Dr. Adam Clark says : "The serpent must have walked erect, for this is necessarily implied in his punishment. That he was endued with the gift of speech, also with reason. That these things were given to this creature. The woman no doubt having often seen him walking erect, and talking and reasoning, therefore she testifies no sort of surprise when he accosts her in the language related in the text. It therefore appears to me that a creature of the ape or orang-outang kind is here intended, and that Satan made use of this creature as the most proper instrument for the accomplishment of his murderous purposes against the life of the soul of man. Under this creature he lay hid, and by this creature he seduced our first parents. Such a creature answers to every part of the description in the text. It is evident from the structure of its limbs and its muscles that it might have been originally designed to walk erect, and that nothing else than the sovereign controlling power could induce it to put down hands—in every respect formed like

those of man—and walk like those creatures whose claw-armed parts prove them to have been designed to walk on all fours. The stealthy cunning and endless variety of the pranks and tricks of these creatures show them even now to be wiser and more intelligent than any other creature, man alone excepted. Being obliged to walk on all fours and gather their food from the ground, they are literally obliged to eat the dust ; and though exceedingly cunning, and careful in a variety of instances to separate that part which is wholesome and proper for food from that which is not so, in the article of cleanliness they are lost to all sense of propriety. Add to this their utter aversion to walk upright. It requires the utmost discipline to bring them to it, and scarcely anything offends or irritates them more than to be obliged to do it. Long observation of these animals enables me to state these facts. For earnest, attentive watching, and for chattering and babbling, they (the apes) have no fellows in the animal world. Indeed, the ability and propensity to chatter is all they have left of their original gift of speech, of which they appear to have been deprived at the Fall as a part of their punishment."

Here, then, is the "connecting-link" between man and the lower creation. The serpent was simply an orang-outang that spoke Hebrew with the greatest ease, and had the outward appearance of a perfect gentleman, seductive in manner, plausible, polite, and most admirably calculated to deceive. It never did seem reasonable to me that a long, cold, and disgusting snake, with an apple in his mouth, could deceive anybody ; and I am glad, even at this late date, to know that the something that persuaded Eve to taste the forbidden fruit was at least in the shape of a man.

Dr. Henry does not agree with the zoological explanation of Dr. Clark, but insists that "it is certain that the Devil that beguiled Eve is the old serpent, a malignant by creation, an angel of light, an immediate attendant upon God's

throne, but by sin an apostate from his first state, and a rebel against God's crown and dignity. He who attacked our first parents was surely the prince of devils, the ringleader in rebellion. The Devil chose to act his part in a serpent, because it is a specious creature, has a spotted, dappled skin, and then went erect. Perhaps it was a flying serpent which seemed to come from on high, as a messenger from the upper world, one of the seraphim; because the serpent is a subtle creature. What Eve thought of this serpent speaking to her we are not likely to tell, and, I believe, she herself did not know what to think of it. At first, perhaps, she supposed it might be a good angel, and yet afterwards might suspect something amiss. The person tempted was a woman, now alone, and at a distance from her husband, but near the forbidden tree. It was the Devil's subtlety to assault the weaker vessel with his temptations, as we may suppose her inferior to Adam in knowledge, strength, and presence of mind. Some think that Eve received the command, not immediately from God, but at second-hand from her husband, and might, therefore, be the more easily persuaded to discredit it. It was the policy of the Devil to enter into discussion with her when she was alone. He took advantage by finding her near the forbidden tree. God permitted Satan to prevail over Eve, for wise and holy ends. Satan teaches men first to doubt and then to deny. He makes sceptics first, and by degrees makes them Atheists."

We are compelled to admit that nothing could be more attractive to a woman than a snake walking erect, with a "spotted, dappled skin," unless it were a serpent with wings. Is it not humiliating to know that our ancestors believed these things? Why should we object to the Darwinian doctrine of descent after this?

Our fathers thought it their duty to believe, thought it a sin to entertain the slightest doubt, and really supposed that their credulity was exceedingly gratifying to God. To them the story was entirely

real. They could see the garden, hear the babble of waters, smell the perfume of flowers. They believed there was a tree where knowledge grew like plums or pears; and they could plainly see the serpent coiled amid its rustling leaves, coaxing Eve to violate the laws of God.

Where did the serpent come from? On which of the six days was he created? Who made him? Is it possible that God would make a successful rival? He must have known that Adam and Eve would fall. He knew what a snake with a "spotted, dappled skin" could do with an inexperienced woman. Why did he not defend his children? He knew that, if the serpent got into the garden, Adam and Eve would sin, that he would have to drive them out, that afterwards the world would be destroyed, and that he himself would die upon the cross.

Again, I ask, what and who was this serpent? He was not a man, for only one man had been made. He was not a woman. He was not a beast of the field, because "he was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." He was neither fish nor fowl, nor snake, because he had the power of speech, and did not crawl upon his belly until after he was cursed. Where did this serpent come from? Why was he not kept out of the garden? Why did not the Lord take him by the tail and snap his head off? Why did he not put Adam and Eve on their guard about this serpent? They, of course, were not acquainted with the neighbourhood, and knew nothing about the serpent's reputation for truth and veracity among his neighbours. Probably Adam saw him when he was looking for "an helpmeet," and gave him a name; but Eve had never met him before. She was not surprised to hear a serpent talk, as that was the first one she had ever met. Everything being new to her, and her husband not being with her just at that moment, it need hardly excite our wonder that she tasted the fruit by way of experiment. Neither should we be surprised that when

she saw it was good and pleasant to the eye, and a fruit to make one wise, she had the generosity to divide with her husband.

Theologians have filled thousands of volumes with abuse of this serpent ; but it seems that he told the exact truth. We are told that this serpent was, in fact, Satan, the greatest enemy of mankind, and that he entered the serpent, appearing to our first parents in its body. If this is so, why should the serpent have been cursed? Why should God curse the serpent for what had really been done by the Devil? Did Satan remain in the body of the serpent, and in some mysterious manner share his punishment? Is it true that when we kill a snake we also destroy an evil spirit, or is there but one Devil, and did he perish at the death of the first serpent? Is it on account of that transaction in the Garden of Eden that all the descendants of Adam and Eve known as Jews and Christians hate serpents?

Do you account for the snake-worship in Mexico, Africa, and India in the same way?

What was the form of the serpent when he entered the garden, and in what way did he move from place to place? Did he walk or fly? Certainly he did not crawl, because that mode of locomotion was pronounced upon him as a curse. Upon what food did he subsist before his conversation with Eve? We know that after that he lived on dust, but what did he eat before? It may be that this is all poetic; and the truest poetry is, according to Touchstone, "the most feigning."

In this same chapter we are informed that "unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them." Where did the Lord God get those skins? He must have taken them from the animals; he was a butcher. Then he had to prepare them; he was a tanner. Then he made them into coats; he was a tailor. How did it happen that they needed coats of skins, when they had been perfectly comfortable in a nude

condition? Did the "fall" produce a change in the climate?

Is it really necessary to believe this account in order to be happy here or hereafter? Does it tend to the elevation of the human race to speak of "God" as a butcher, tanner, and tailor?

And here let me say, once for all, that when I speak of God I mean the being described by Moses: the Jehovah of the Jews. There may be, for aught I know, somewhere in the unknown shoreless vast, some being whose dreams are constellations, and within whose thought the infinite exists. About this being, if such a one exists, I have nothing to say. He has written no books, inspired no barbarians, required no worship, and has prepared no hell in which to burn the honest seeker after truth.

When I speak of God, I mean that God who prevented man from putting forth his hand and taking also of the fruit of the tree of life that he might live for ever; of that God who multiplied the agonies of woman, increased the weary toil of man, and in his anger drowned a world; of that God whose altars reeked with human blood, who butchered babes, violated maidens, enslaved men, and filled the earth with cruelty and crime; of that God who made heaven for the few, hell for the many, and who will gloat for ever and ever upon the writhings of the lost and damned.

XVIII.—DAMPNESS.

"And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,

"That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

"And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

"There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in, unto the daughters

of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

"And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

"And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."

From this account it seems that driving Adam and Eve out of Eden did not have the effect of improving them or their children. On the contrary, the world grew worse and worse. They were under the immediate control and government of God, and he from time to time made known his will; but, in spite of this, man's crimes continued to increase.

Nothing in particular seems to have been done. Not a school was established. There was no written language. There was not a Bible in the world. The "scheme of salvation" was kept a profound secret. The five points of Calvinism had not been taught. Sunday-schools had not been opened. In short, nothing had been done for the reformation of the world. God did not even keep his own sons at home, but allowed them to leave their abode in the firmament, and make love to the daughters of men. As a result of this the world was filled with wickedness and giants to such an extent that God regretted "that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."

Of course, God knew, when he made man, that he would afterwards regret it. He knew that the people would grow worse and worse until destruction would be the only remedy. He knew that he would have to kill all except Noah and his family, and it is hard to see why he did not make Noah and his

family, in the first place, and leave Adam and Eve in the original dust. He knew that they would be tempted; that he would have to drive them out of the garden to keep them from eating of the tree of life; that the whole thing would be a failure; that Satan would defeat his plan; that he could not reform the people; that his own sons would corrupt them; and that at last he would have to drown them all except Noah and his family. Why was the garden of Eden planted? Why was the experiment made? Why were Adam and Eve exposed to the seductive arts of the serpent? Why did God wait until the cool of the day before looking after his children? Why was he not on hand in the morning? Why did he fill the world with his own children, knowing that he would have to destroy them? And why does this same God tell me how to raise my children when he had to drown his?

It is a little curious that when God wished to reform the antediluvian world he said nothing about hell; that he had no revivals, no camp-meetings, no tracts, no outpourings of the Holy Ghost, no baptisms, no noon prayer meetings, and never mentioned the great doctrine of salvation by faith. If the orthodox creeds of the world are true, all those people went to hell without ever having heard that such a place existed. If eternal torment is a fact, surely these miserable wretches ought to have been warned. They were threatened only with water when they were in fact doomed to eternal fire!

Is it not strange that God said nothing to Adam and Eve about the future life? that he should have kept these "infinite verities" to himself, and allow millions to live and die without the hope of heaven or the fear of hell?

It may be that hell was not made at that time. In the six days of creation nothing is said about the construction of a bottomless pit, and the serpent himself did not make his appearance until after the creation of man and

woman. Perhaps he was made on the first Sunday, and from that fact came, it may be, the old couplet :—

“And Satan still some mischief finds
For idle hands to do.”

The sacred historian failed also to tell us when the cherubim and the flaming sword were made, and said nothing about two of the persons composing the Trinity. It certainly would have been an easy thing to enlighten Noah and his immediate descendants. The world was then only about fifteen hundred and thirty-six years old, and only about three or four generations of men had lived. Adam had been dead only about six hundred and six years, and some of his grandchildren must, at that time, have been alive and well.

It is hard to see why God did not civilise these people. He certainly had the power to use and the wisdom to devise the proper means. What right has a god to fill a world with fiends? Can there be goodness in this? Why should he make experiments that he knows must fail? Is there wisdom in this? And what right has a man to charge an infinite being with wickedness and folly?

According to Moses, God made up his mind not only to destroy the people, but the beasts and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air. What had the beasts, and the creeping things, and the birds done to excite the anger of God?

Why did he repent having made them? Will some Christian give us an explanation of this matter? No good man will inflict unnecessary pain upon a beast; how, then, can we worship a God who cares nothing for the agonies of the dumb creatures that he made?

Why did he make animals that he knew he would destroy? Does God delight in causing pain? He had the power to make the beasts, and fowls, and creeping things in his own good time and way, and it is to be presumed that he made them according to his wish. Why should he destroy them? They had committed no sin. They had eaten no

forbidden fruit, made no aprons, nor tried to reach the tree of life. Yet this God, in blind, unreasoning wrath, destroyed “all flesh wherein was the breath of life, and every living thing beneath the sky, and every substance wherein was life that he had made.”

Jehovah, having made up his mind to drown the world, told Noah to make an Ark of gopher wood three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. A cubit is twenty-two inches; so that the ark was five-hundred and fifty feet long, ninety-one feet and eight inches wide, and fifty-five feet high. This ark was divided into three stories, and had, on top, one window twenty-two inches square. Ventilation must have been one of Jehovah's hobbies. Think of a ship larger than the *Great Eastern* with only one window, and that but twenty-two inches square!

The ark also had one door set in the side thereof that shut from the outside. As soon as the ship was finished, and properly victualled, Noah received seven days' notice to get the animals in the ark.

It is claimed by some of the scientific theologians that the flood was partial, that the waters covered only a small portion of the world, and that consequently only a few animals were in the ark. It is impossible to conceive of language that can more clearly convey the idea of a universal flood than that found in the inspired account. If the flood was only partial, why did God say he would “destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life from under heaven, and that every thing that is in the earth shall die”? Why did he say, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping thing and the fowls of the air”? Why did he say, “And every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth”? Would a partial, local flood have fulfilled these threats?

Nothing can be clearer than that the writer of this account intended to convey, and did convey, the idea that the flood

was universal. Why should Christians try to deprive God of the glory of having wrought the most stupendous of miracles? Is it possible that the infinite could not overwhelm with waves this atom called the earth? Do you doubt his power, his wisdom, or his justice?

Believers in miracles should not endeavour to explain them. There is but one way to explain anything, and that is to account for it by natural agencies. The moment you explain a miracle, it disappears. You should depend not upon explanation, but assertion. You should not be driven from the field because the miracle is shown to be unreasonable. You should reply that all miracles are unreasonable. Neither should you be in the least disheartened if it is shown to be impossible. The possible is not miraculous. You should take the ground that, if miracles were reasonable and possible, there would be no reward paid for believing them. The Christian has the goodness to believe, while the sinner asks for evidence. It is enough for God to work miracles without being called upon to substantiate them for the benefit of unbelievers.

Only a few years ago the Christians believed implicitly in the literal truth of every miracle recorded in the Bible. Whoever tried to explain them in some natural way was looked upon as an infidel in disguise, but now he is regarded as a benefactor. The credulity of the Church is decreasing, and the most marvellous miracles are now either "explained" or allowed to take refuge behind the mistakes of the translators, or hide in the drapery of allegory.

In the sixth chapter (v. 19) Noah is ordered to take "of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort" into the ark—"male and female." In the seventh chapter (v. 2) the order is changed, and Noah is commanded, according to the Protestant Bible, as follows: "Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female; and of beasts that are not clean by twos, the male and his female. Of

fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female."

According to the Catholic Bible, Noah was commanded: "Of all clean beasts take seven and seven, the male and the female. But of the beasts that are unclean two and two, the male and the female. Of the fowls also of the air seven and seven, the male and the female."

For the purpose of belittling this miracle, many commentators have taken the ground that Noah was not ordered to take seven males and seven females of each kind of clean beasts, but seven in all. Many Christians contend that only seven clean beasts of each kind were taken into the ark—three and a half of each sex.

If the account in the seventh chapter means anything, it means, *first*, that of each kind of clean beasts fourteen were to be taken, seven males and seven females; *second*, that of unclean beasts should be taken two of each kind, one of each sex; and, *third*, that he should take of every kind of fowls seven of each sex.

It is equally clear that the command in the 19th and 20th verses of the 6th chapter is to take two of each sort, one male and one female. And this agrees exactly with the account in the 8th, 9th, 14th, 15th, and 16th verses of the seventh chapter.

The next question is, How many beasts, fowls, and creeping things did Noah take into the ark?

There are now known and classified at least twelve thousand five hundred species of birds. There are still vast territories in China, South America, and Africa unknown to the ornithologist.

Of the birds Noah took fourteen of each species, according to the third verse of the seventh chapter, "Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female," making a total of 175,000 birds.

And right here allow me to ask a question. If the flood was simply a partial flood, why were the birds taken into the ark? It seems to me that most

birds, attending strictly to business, might avoid a partial flood.

There are at least sixteen hundred and fifty-eight kinds of beasts. Let us suppose that twenty-five of these are clean. Of the clean, fourteen of each kind—seven of each sex—were taken. These amount to 350. Of the unclean, two of each kind, amounting to 3,266. There are some six hundred and fifty species of reptiles. Two of each kind amount to 1,300. And, lastly, there are of insects, including the creeping things, at least one million species, so that Noah and his folks had to get of these into the ark about 2,000,000.

Animalculæ have not been taken into consideration. There are probably many hundreds of thousands of species, many of them invisible, and yet Noah had to pick them out by pairs. Very few people have any just conception of the trouble Noah had.

We know that there are many animals on this continent not found in the Old World. These must have been carried from here to the ark, and then brought back afterwards. Were the peccary, armadillo, ant-eater, sloth, agouti, vampirebat, marmoset, howling and prehensile-tailed monkey, the racoon and musk-rat, carried by the angels from America to Asia? How did they get there? Did the polar bear leave his field of ice and journey towards the tropics? How did he know where the ark was? Did the kangaroo swim or jump from Australia to Asia? Did the giraffe, hippopotamus, antelope, and orang-outang journey from Africa in search of the ark? Can absurdities go farther than this?

What had these animals to eat while on the journey? What did they eat while in the ark? What did they drink? When the rain came, of course the rivers ran to the seas, and these seas rose, and finally covered the world. The waters of the seas, mingled with those of the flood, would make all salt. It has been calculated that it required, to drown the world, about eight times as much water

as was in all the seas. To find how salt the waters of the flood must have been, take eight quarts of fresh water, and add one quart from the sea. Such water would create instead of allaying thirst. Noah had to take in his ark fresh water for all his beasts, birds, and living things. He had to take the proper food for all. How long was he in the ark? Three hundred and seventy-seven days! Think of the food necessary for the monsters of the antediluvian world!

Eight persons did all the work. They attended to the wants of 175,000 birds, 3,616 beasts, 1,300 reptiles, and 2,000,000 insects, saying nothing of countless animalculæ.

Well, after they all got in, Noah pulled down the window, God shut the door, and the rain commenced.

How long did it rain?—Forty days.

How deep did the water get?—About five miles and a half.

How much did it rain a day?—Enough to cover the whole world to a depth of about seven hundred and forty-two feet.

Some Christians say that the fountains of the great deep were broken up. Will they be kind enough to tell us what the fountains of the great deep are? Others say that God has vast stores of water in the centre of the earth that he used on that occasion. How did these waters happen to run up hill?

Gentlemen, allow me to tell you once more that you must not try to explain these things. Your efforts in that direction do no good, because your explanations are harder to believe than the miracle itself. Take my advice—stick to assertion, and let explanation alone.

Then, as now, Deodhungha lifted its crown of snow twenty-nine thousand feet above the level of the sea, and on the cloudless cliffs of Chimborazo then, as now, sat the condor; and yet the waters, rising seven hundred and twenty-six feet a day—thirty feet an hour, six inches a minute—rose over the hills, over the volcanoes, filled the vast craters, extinguished all the fires, rose above every mountain peak, until the vast world was

but one shoreless sea covered with the innumerable dead.

Was this the work of the most merciful God, the father of us all? If there is a God, can there be the slightest danger of incurring his displeasure by doubting, even in a reverential way, the truth of such a cruel lie? If we think that God is kinder than he really is, will our poor souls be burned for that?

How many trees can live under miles of water for a year? What became of the soil washed, scattered, dissolved, and covered with the *débris* of a world? How were the tender plants and herbs preserved? How were the animals preserved after leaving the ark? There was no grass except such as had been submerged for a year. There were no animals to be devoured by the carnivorous beasts. What became of the birds that fed on worms and insects? What became of the birds that devoured other birds?

It must be remembered that the pressure of the water when at the highest point—say twenty-nine thousand feet—would have been about eight hundred tons on each square foot. Such a pressure certainly would have destroyed nearly every vestige of vegetable life, so that when the animals came out of the ark there was not a mouthful of food in the wide world. How were they supported until the world was again clothed with grass? How were those animals taken care of that subsisted on others? Where did the bees get honey and the ants seed? There was not a creeping thing upon the whole earth; not a breathing thing beneath the whole heavens; not a living substance. Where did the tenants of the ark get food?

There is but one answer, if the story is true. The food necessary not only during the year of the flood, but sufficient for many months afterwards, must have been stored in the *Ark*.

There is probably not an animal in the world that will not, in a year, eat and drink ten times its weight. Noah must have provided food and water for a year

while in the ark, and food for at least six months after they got ashore. It must have required for a pair of elephants about one hundred and fifty tons of food and water. A couple of mammoths would have required about twice that amount. Of course there were other monsters that lived on trees, and in a year would have devoured quite a forest.

How could eight persons have distributed this food, even if the ark had been large enough to hold it? How was the ark kept clean? We know how it was ventilated; but what was done with the filth? How were the animals watered? How were some portions of the ark heated for animals from the tropics, and others kept cool for the polar bears? How did the animals get back to their respective countries? Some had to creep back about six thousand miles, and they could only go a few feet a day. Some of the creeping things must have started for the ark just as soon as they were made, and kept up a steady jog for sixteen hundred years. Think of a couple of the slowest snails leaving a point opposite the ark and starting for the plains of Shinar, a distance of twelve thousand miles. Going at the rate of a mile a month, it would take them a thousand years. How did they get there? Polar bears must have gone several thousand miles, and so sudden a change in climate must have been exceedingly trying to their health. How did they know the way to go? Of course, all the polar bears did not go. Only two were required. Who selected these?

Two sloths had to make the journey from South America. These creatures cannot travel to exceed three rods a day. At this rate they would make a mile in about a hundred days. They must have gone about six thousand five hundred miles to reach the ark. Supposing them to have travelled by a reasonably direct route, in order to complete the journey before Noah hauled in the plank, they must have started several years before the world was created. We must also consider that these sloths had to board

themselves on the way, and that most of their time had to be taken up getting food and water. It is exceedingly doubtful whether a sloth could travel six thousand miles and board himself in less than three thousand years.

Volumes might be written upon the infinite absurdity of this most incredible, wicked, and foolish of all the fables contained in that repository of the impossible called the Bible. To me it is a matter of amazement that it ever was for a moment believed by any intelligent human being.

Dr. Adam Clark says that "the animals were brought to the ark by the power of God, and their enmities were so removed or suspended that the lion could dwell peaceably with the lamb, and the wolf sleep happily by the side of the kid. There is no positive evidence that animal food was ever used before the flood. Noah had the first grant of this kind."

Dr. Scott remarks: "There seems to have been a very extraordinary miracle, perhaps by the ministration of angels, in bringing two of every species to Noah, and rendering them submissive and peaceful with each other. Yet it seems not to have made any impression upon the hardened spectators. The suspension of the ferocity of the savage beasts during their continuance in the ark is generally considered as an apt figure of the change that takes place in the disposition of sinners when they enter the true Church of Christ."

He believed the deluge to have been universal. In his day science had not demonstrated the absurdity of this belief, and he was not compelled to resort to some theory not found in the Bible. He insisted that, "by some vast convulsion, the very bowels of the earth were forced upwards, and rain poured down in cataclysms and water-spouts, with no intermission, for forty days and nights, and until in every place a universal deluge was effected.

"The presence of God was the only comfort of Noah in his dreary confinement, and in witnessing the dire devas-

tation of the earth and its inhabitants, and especially of the human species—of his companions, his neighbours, his relatives—all those to whom he had preached, for whom he had prayed, and over whom he had wept, and even of many who had helped to build the ark.

"It seems that, by a peculiar providential interposition, no animal of any sort died, although they had been shut up in the ark above a year; and it does not appear that there had been any increase of them during that time.

"The ark was flat-bottomed—square at each end—roofed like a house, so that it terminated at the top in the breadth of a cubit. It was divided into many little cabins for its intended inhabitants. Pitched within and without to keep it tight and sweet, and lighted from the upper part. But it must, at first sight, be evident that so large a vessel, thus constructed, with so few persons on board, was utterly unfitted to weather out the deluge, except it was under the immediate guidance and protection of the Almighty."

Dr. Henry furnished the Christian world with the following:—

"As our bodies have in them the humours which, when God pleases, become the springs and seeds of mortal disease, so that the earth had, in its bowels, those waters which, at God's command, sprung up and flooded it.

"God made the world in six days, but he was forty days in destroying it, because he is slow to anger.

"The hostilities between the animals in the ark ceased, and ravenous creatures became mild and manageable, so that the wolf lay down with the lamb, and the lion ate straw like an ox.

"God shut the door to secure Noah and to keep him safe, and because it was necessary that the door should be shut very close lest the water should break in and sink the ark, and very fast lest others might break it down.

"The waters rose so high that not only the low, flat countries were deluged, but, to make sure work, and that none

might escape, the tops of the highest mountains were overflowed fifteen cubits. That is, seven and a half yards, so that salvation was not hoped for from hills or mountains.

"Perhaps some of the people got to the top of the ark, and hoped to shift for themselves there. But either they perished there for want of food, or the dashing rain washed them off the top. Others, it may be, hoped to prevail with Noah for admission into the ark, and plead old acquaintance.

"Have we not eaten and drank in thy presence? Hast thou not preached in our streets?' 'Yea,' said Noah, 'many a time, but to little purpose. I called, but ye refused; and now it is not in my power to help you. God has shut the door, and I cannot open it.'

"We may suppose that some of those who perished in the deluge had themselves assisted Noah, or were employed by him in building the ark.

"Hitherto man had been confined to feed only upon the products of the earth. Fruits, herbs, and roots, and all sorts of greens, and milk, which was the first grant; but the flood, having perhaps washed away much of the fruits of the earth, and rendered them much less pleasant and nourishing, God enlarged the grant and allowed him to eat flesh, which perhaps man never thought of until now that God directed him to it. Nor had he any more desire to it than the sheep has to suck blood like the wolf. But now man is allowed to feed upon flesh as freely and safely as upon the green herbs."

Such was the debasing influence of a belief in the literal truth of the Bible upon these men that their commentaries are filled with passages utterly devoid of common sense.

Dr. Clark, speaking of the mammoth, says:—

"This animal, an astonishing proof of God's power, he seems to have produced merely to show what he could do. And after suffering a few of them to propagate, he extinguished the race by a

merciful providence, that they might not destroy both man and beast."

We are told that it would have been much easier for God to destroy all the people and make new ones, but he would not want to waste anything, and no power or skill should be lavished where no necessity exists.

"The animals were brought to the ark by the power of God."

Again, gentlemen, let me warn you of the danger of trying to explain a miracle. Let it alone. Say that you do not understand it, and do not expect to until taught in the schools of the new Jerusalem. The more reasons you give, the more unreasonable the miracle will appear. Through what you say in defence people are led to think, and, as soon as they really think, the miracle is thrown away.

Among the most ignorant nations you will find the most wonders; among the most enlightened, the least. It is with individuals the same as with nations. Ignorance believes, Intelligence examines and explains.

For about seven months the ark, with its cargo of men, animals, and insects, tossed and wandered without rudder or sail upon a boundless sea. At last it grounded on the mountain of Ararat; and about three months afterwards the tops of the mountains became visible. It must not be forgotten that the mountain where the ark is supposed to have first touched bottom was about seventeen thousand feet high. How were the animals from the tropics kept warm? When the waters were abated it would be intensely cold at a point seventeen thousand feet above the level of the sea. Maybe there were stoves, furnaces, fireplaces, and steam-coils in the ark; but they are not mentioned in the inspired narrative. How were the animals kept from freezing? It will not do to say that Ararat was not very high after all.

If you will read the fourth and fifth verses of the eighth chapter, you will see that, although "the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day

of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat," it was not until the first day of the tenth month that the "tops of the mountains" could be seen. From this it would seem that the ark must have rested upon about the highest peak in that country. Noah waited forty days more, and then for the first time opened the window and took a breath of fresh air. He then sent out a raven that did not return, then a dove that returned. He then waited seven days, and sent forth a dove that returned not. From this he knew that the waters were abated. Is it possible that he could not see whether the waters had gone? Is it possible to conceive a more perfectly childish way of ascertaining whether the earth was dry?

At last Noah "removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry," and thereupon God told him to disembark. In his gratitude Noah built an altar and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour, and said in his heart that he would not any more curse the ground for man's sake. For saying this in his heart the Lord gives as a reason, not that man is, or will be, good, but because "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." God destroyed man because "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *because every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*" And he promised for the same reason not to destroy him again. Will some gentleman skilled in theology give us an explanation?

After God had smelled the sweet savour of sacrifice, he seems to have changed his idea as to the proper diet for man. When Adam and Eve were created they were allowed to eat herbs bearing seed, and the fruit of trees. When they were turned out of Eden, God said to them, "Thou shalt eat the herb of the field." In the first chapter of Genesis the "green herb" was given for food to the beasts, fowls, and creep-

ing things. Upon being expelled from the garden, Adam and Eve, as to their food, were put upon an equality with the lower animals. According to this, the antediluvians were vegetarians. This may account for their wickedness and longevity.

After Noah sacrificed, and God smelled the sweet savour, he said: "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things." Afterwards this same God changed his mind again, and divided the beasts and birds into clean and unclean, and made it crime for man to eat the unclean. Probably food was so scarce when Noah was let out of the ark that Jehovah generously allowed him to eat anything and everything he could find.

According to the account, God then made a covenant with Noah to the effect that he would not again destroy the world with a flood, and, as the attesting witness of this contract, a rainbow was set in the cloud. This bow was placed in the sky so that it might perpetually remind God of his promise and covenant. Without this visible witness and reminder, it would seem that Jehovah was liable to forget the contract, and drown the world again. Did the rainbow originate in this way? Did God put it in the cloud simply to keep his agreement in his memory?

For me it is impossible to believe the story of the deluge. It seems so cruel, so barbaric, so crude in detail, so absurd in all its parts, and so contrary to all we know of law, that even credulity itself is shocked.

Many nations have preserved accounts of a deluge in which all people, except a family or two, were destroyed. Babylon was certainly a city before Jerusalem was founded. Egypt was in the height of her power when there were only seventy Jews in the world, and India had a literature before the name of Jehovah had passed the lips of superstition. An account of a general deluge "was discovered by George Smith, translated

from another account that was written about two thousand years before Christ." Of course, it is impossible to tell how long the story had lived in the memory of tradition before it was reduced to writing by the Babylonians. According to this account, which is, without doubt, much older than the one given by Moses, Tamzi built a ship at the command of the god Hea, and put in it his family and the beasts of the field. He pitched the ship inside and outside with bitumen, and as soon as it was finished there came a flood of rain and "destroyed all life from the face of the whole earth. On the seventh day there was a calm, and the ship stranded on the mountain Nizir." Tamzi waited for seven days more, and then let out a dove. Afterwards he let out a swallow, and that, as well as the dove, returned. Then he let out a raven, and, as that did not return, he concluded that the water had dried away, and thereupon left the ship. Then he made an offering to God, or the gods, and "Hea interceded with Bel," so that the earth might never again be drowned.

This is the Babylonian story, told without the contradictions of the original. For in that, it seems, there are two accounts, as well as in the Bible. Is it not a strange coincidence that there should be contradictory accounts mingled in both the Babylonian and the Jewish stories?

In the Bible there are two accounts. In one account Noah was to take two of all beasts, birds, and creeping things into the ark, while in the other he was commanded to take of clean beasts and all birds by sevens of each kind. According to one account, the flood lasted only one hundred and fifty days—as related in the third verse of the eighth chapter; while the other account fixes the time at three hundred and seventy-seven days. Both of these accounts cannot be true. Yet, in order to be saved, it is not sufficient to believe one of them—you must believe both.

Among the Egyptians there is a story

to the effect that the great god Ra became utterly maddened with the people, and deliberately made up his mind that he would exterminate mankind. Thereupon he began to destroy, and continued in the terrible work until blood flowed in streams, when suddenly he ceased, and took an oath that he would not again destroy the human race. This myth was probably thousands of years old when Moses was born.

So in India there was a fable about the flood. A fish warned Manu that a flood was coming. Manu built a "box," and the fish towed it to a mountain, and saved all hands.

Stories of the same kind were told in Greece, and among our own Indian tribes. At one time the Christians pointed to the fact that many nations told of a flood as evidence of the truth of the Mosaic account; but now, it having been shown that other accounts are much older and equally reasonable, that argument has ceased to be of any great value.

It is probable that all these accounts had a common origin. They were born of something in nature visible to all nations. The idea of a universal flood, produced by a God to drown the world on account of the sins of the people, is infinitely absurd. The solution of all these stories has been supposed to be the existence of partial floods in most countries; and for a long time this solution was satisfactory. But the fact that these stories are greatly alike, that only one man is warned, that only one family is saved, that a boat is built, that birds are sent out to find if the water has abated, tend to show that they had a common origin. Admitting that there were severe floods in all countries, it certainly cannot follow that in each instance only one family would be saved, or that the same story would in each instance be told. It may be urged that the natural tendency of man to exaggerate calamities might account for this agreement in all the accounts, and it must be admitted that there is some force in the suggestion. I believe, though, that the real origin of

all these myths is the same, and that it was originally an effort to account for the sun, moon, and stars. The sun and moon were the man and wife, or the god and goddess, and the stars were their children. From a celestial myth, it became a terrestrial one; the air, or ether-ocean, became a flood, produced by rain, and the sun, moon, and stars became man, woman, and children.

In the original story the mountain was the place where in the far east the sky was supposed to touch the earth, and it was there that the ship containing the celestial passengers finally rested from its voyage. But whatever may be the origin of the stories of the flood, whether told first by Hindu, Babylonian, or Hebrew, we may rest perfectly assured that they are all equally false.

XIX.—BACCHUS AND BABEL.

As soon as Noah had disembarked, he proceeded to plant a vineyard, and began to be a husbandman; and when grapes were ripe he made wine, and drank of it to excess: cursed his grandson, blessed Shem and Japheth, and after that lived for three hundred and fifty years. What he did during these three hundred and fifty years we are not told. We never hear of him again. For three hundred and fifty years he lived among his sons and daughters, and their descendants. He must have been a venerable man. He was the man to whom God had made known his intention of drowning the world. By his efforts the human race had been saved. He must have been acquainted with Methuselah for six hundred years, and Methuselah was about two hundred and forty years old when Adam died. Noah must himself have known the history of mankind, and must have been an object of almost infinite interest; and yet for three hundred and fifty years he is neither directly nor indirectly mentioned. When Noah died Abraham must have been more than fifty years old; and Shem, the son of Noah, lived for several hundred years after the death of Abraham; and yet he

is never mentioned. Noah, when he died, was the oldest man in the whole world by about five hundred years; and everybody living at the time of his death knew that they were indebted to him, and yet no account is given of his burial. No monument was raised to mark the spot. This, however, is no more wonderful than the fact that no account is given of the death of Adam and Eve, nor of the place of their burial. This may all be accounted for by the fact that the language of man was confounded at the building of the Tower of Babel, whereby all tradition may have been lost, so that even the sons of Noah could not give an account of their voyage in the ark; and consequently someone had to be directly inspired to tell the story, after new languages had been formed.

It has always been a mystery to me how Adam, Eve, and the serpent were taught the same language. Where did they get it? We know now that it requires a great number of years to form a language; that it is of exceedingly slow growth. We also know that by language man conveys to his fellows the impressions made upon him by what he sees, hears, smells, and touches. We know that the language of the savage consists of a few sounds, capable of expressing only a few ideas or states of the mind, such as love, desire, fear, hatred, aversion, and contempt. Many centuries are required to produce a language capable of expressing complex ideas. It does not seem to me that ideas can be manufactured by the deity and put in the brain of man. These ideas must be the result of observation and experience.

Does anybody believe that God directly taught a language to Adam and Eve, or that he so made them that they by intuition spoke Hebrew, or some language capable of conveying to each other their thoughts? How did the serpent learn the same language? Did God teach it to him, or did he happen to overhear God, when he was teaching Adam and Eve? We are told in the

second chapter of Genesis that God caused all the animals to pass before Adam, to see what he would call them. We cannot infer from this that God named the animals, and informed Adam what to call them. Adam named them himself. Where did he get his words? We cannot imagine a man just made out of dust, without the experience of a moment, having the power to put his thoughts in language. In the first place, we cannot conceive of his having any thoughts until he has combined, through experience and observation, the impressions that nature had made upon him through the medium of his senses. We cannot imagine his knowing anything, in the first instance, about different degrees of heat nor about darkness, if he was made in the day-time, nor about light, if created at night, until the next morning. Before a man can have what we call thoughts, he must have had a little experience. Something must have happened to him before he can have a thought, and before he can express himself in language. Language is a growth, not a gift. We account now for the diversity of language by the fact that tribes and nations have had different experiences, different wants, different surroundings; and one result of all these differences is, among other things, a difference in language. Nothing can be more absurd than to account for the different languages of the world by saying that the original language was confounded at the Tower of Babel.

According to the Bible, up to the time of the building of that tower the whole earth was of one language and of one speech, and would have so remained until the present time had not an attempt been made to build a tower whose top should reach into heaven. Can anyone imagine what objection God would have to the building of such a tower? And how could the confusion of tongues prevent its construction? How could language be confounded? It could be confounded only by the destruction of memory. Did God destroy the memory

of mankind at that time, and, if so, how? Did he paralyse that portion of the brain presiding over the organs of articulation, so that they could not speak the words, although they remembered them clearly, or did he so touch the brain that they could not hear? Will some theologian, versed in the machinery of the miraculous, tell us in what way God confounded the language of mankind?

Why should the confounding of the language make them separate? Why should they not stay together until they could understand each other? People will not separate from weakness. When in trouble they come together, and desire the assistance of each other. Why, in this instance, did they separate? What particular ones would naturally come together if nobody understood the language of any other person? Would it not have been just as hard to agree when and where to go, without any language to express the agreement, as to go on with the building of the tower?

Is it possible that anyone now believes that the whole world would have been of one speech had the language not been confounded at Babel? Do we not know that every word was suggested in some way by the experience of men? Do we not know that words are continually dying, and continually being born; that every language has its cradle and its cemetery—its buds, its blossoms, its fruits, and its withered leaves? Man has loved, enjoyed, hated, suffered, and hoped, and all words have been born of these experiences.

Why did "the Lord come down to see the city and the tower"? Could he not see them from where he lived, or from where he was? Where did he come down from? Did he come in the day-time or in the night? We are taught now that God is everywhere; that he inhabits immensity; that he is in every atom and in every star. If that is true, why did he "come down to see the city and the tower"? Will some theologian explain this?

After all, is it not much easier and

altogether more reasonable to say that Moses was mistaken, that he knew little of the science of language, and that he guessed a great deal more than he investigated?

XX.—FAITH IN FILTH.

No light whatever is shed upon what passed in the world after the confounding of language at Babel, until the birth of Abraham. But, before speaking of the history of the Jewish people, it may be proper for me to say that many things are recounted in Genesis, and other books attributed to Moses, of which I do not wish to speak. There are many pages of these books unfit to read, many stories not calculated, in my judgment, to improve the morals of mankind. I do not wish even to call the attention of my readers to these things, except in a general way. It is to be hoped that the time will come when such chapters and passages as cannot be read without leaving the blush of shame upon the cheek of modesty will be left out, and not published as a part of the Bible. If there is a God, it certainly is blasphemous to attribute to him the authorship of pages too obscene, beastly, and vulgar to be read in the presence of men and women.

The believers in the Bible are loud in their denunciation of what they are pleased to call the immoral literature of the world; and yet few books have been published containing more moral filth than this inspired word of God. These stories are not redeemed by a single flash of wit or humour. They never rise above the dull details of stupid vice. For one, I cannot afford to soil my pages with extracts from them; and all such portions of the Scriptures I leave to be examined, written upon, and explained by the clergy. Clergymen may know some way by which they can extract honey from these flowers. Until these passages are expunged from the Old Testament it is not a fit book to be read by either old or young. It contains pages that no minister in the United

States would read to his congregation for any reward whatever. There are chapters that no gentleman would read in the presence of a lady. There are chapters that no father would read to his child. There are narratives utterly unfit to be told; and the time will come when mankind will wonder that such a book was ever called inspired.

I know that in many books besides the Bible there are immodest lines. Some of the greatest writers have soiled their pages with indecent words. We account for this by saying that the authors were human; that they catered for the taste and spirit of their times. We make excuses, but at the same time we regret that in their works they left an impure word. But what shall we say of God? Is it possible that a being of infinite purity—the author of modesty—would smirch the pages of his book with stories lewd, licentious, and obscene? If God is the author of the Bible, it is, of course, the standard by which all other books can and should be measured. If the Bible is not obscene, what book is? Why should men be imprisoned simply for imitating God? The Christian world should never say another word against immoral books until it makes the inspired volume clean. These vile and filthy things were not written for the purpose of conveying and enforcing moral truth, but seem to have been written because the author loved an unclean thing. There is no moral depth below that occupied by the writer or publisher of obscene books, that stain with lust the loving heart of youth. Such men should be imprisoned and their books destroyed. The literature of the world should be rendered decent, and no book should be published that cannot be read by and in the hearing of the best and purest people. But as long as the Bible is considered as the Word of God, it will be hard to make all men too good and pure to imitate it; and as long as it is imitated there will be vile and filthy books. The literature of our country will not be sweet and

clean until the Bible ceases to be regarded as the production of a god.

We are continually told that the Bible is the very foundation of modesty and morality; while many of its pages are so immodest and immoral that a minister, for reading them in the pulpit, would be instantly denounced as an unclean wretch. Every woman would leave the church, and if the men stayed, it would be for the purpose of chastising the minister.

Is there any saving grace in hypocrisy? Will men become clean in speech by believing that God is unclean? Would it not be far better to admit that the Bible was written by barbarians in a barbarous, coarse, and vulgar age? Would it not be safer to charge Moses with vulgarity instead of God? Is it not altogether more probable that some ignorant Hebrew would write the vulgar words? The Christians tell me that God is the author of these vile and stupid things. I have examined the question to the best of my ability, and as to God my verdict is—Not Guilty. Faith should not rest on filth.

Every foolish and immodest thing should be expunged from the Bible. Let us keep the good. Let us preserve every great and splendid thought, every wise and prudent maxim, every just law, every elevated idea, and every word calculated to make man nobler and purer, and let us have the courage to throw the rest away. The souls of children should not be stained and soiled. The charming instincts of youth should not be corrupted and defiled. The girls and boys should not be taught that unclean words were uttered by "inspired" lips. Teach them that such words were born of savagery and lust. Teach them that the unclean is the unholy, and that only the pure is sacred.

XXI.—THE HEBREWS.

After language had been confounded, and the people scattered, there appeared in the land of Canaan a tribe of Hebrews ruled by a chief or sheik called Abraham. They had a few cattle, lived in tents,

practised polygamy, wandered from place to place, and were the only folks in the whole world to whom God paid the slightest attention. At this time there were hundreds of cities in India filled with temples and palaces. Millions of Egyptians worshipped Isis and Osiris, and had covered their land with marvellous monuments of industry, power, and skill. But these civilisations were entirely neglected by the Deity, his whole attention being taken up with Abraham and his family.

It seems, from the account, that God and Abraham were intimately acquainted, and conversed frequently upon a great variety of subjects. By the twelfth chapter of Genesis it appears that he made the following promises to Abraham: "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great: and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee."

After receiving this communication from the Almighty, Abraham went into the land of Canaan, and again God appeared to him and told him to take a heifer three years old, a goat of the same age, a sheep of equal antiquity, a turtle dove and a young pigeon. Whereupon Abraham killed the animals "and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another." And it came to pass that when the sun went down and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace and a burning lamp that passed between the raw and bleeding meat. The killing of these animals was a preparation for receiving a visit from God. Should an American missionary in Central Africa find a negro chief surrounded by a butchered heifer, a goat, and a sheep, with which to receive a communication from the infinite God, my opinion is that the missionary would regard the proceedings as the direct result of savagery. And if the chief insisted that he had seen a smoking furnace and a burning lamp going up and down between the pieces of meat, the missionary would certainly conclude

that the chief was not altogether right in his mind.

If the Bible is true, the same God told Abraham to take and sacrifice his only son, or rather the only son of his wife, and a murder would have been committed had not God, just at the right moment, directed him to stay his hand and take a sheep instead.

God made a great number of promises to Abraham, but few of them were ever kept. He agreed to make him the father of a great nation, but he did not. He solemnly promised to give him a great country, including all the land between the river of Egypt and the Euphrates, but he did not.

In due time Abraham passed away, and his son Isaac took his place at the head of the tribe. Then came Jacob, who "watered stock" and enriched himself with the spoil of Laban. Joseph was sold into Egypt by his jealous brethren, where he became one of the chief men of the kingdom, and in a few years his father and brothers left their own country and settled in Egypt. At this time there were seventy Hebrews in the world, counting Joseph and his children. They remained in Egypt two hundred and fifteen years. It is claimed by some that they were in that country for four hundred and thirty years. This is a mistake. Josephus says they were in Egypt two hundred and fifteen years, and this statement is sustained by the best Biblical scholars of all denominations. According to Gal. iii. 17, it was four hundred and thirty years from the time the promise was made to Abraham to the giving of the law, and as the Hebrews did not go to Egypt for two hundred and fifteen years after the making of the promise to Abraham, they could in no event have been in Egypt more than two hundred and fifteen years. In our Bible Exodus xii. 40 is as follows: "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years."

This passage does not say that the

sojourning was all done in Egypt; neither does it say that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt four hundred and thirty years; but it does say that the sojourning of the children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. The Vatican copy of the Septuagint renders the same passage as follows: "The sojourning of the children of Israel, which they sojourned in Egypt and the land of Canaan, was four hundred and thirty years."

The Alexandrian Version says: "The sojourning of the children of Israel, which they and their fathers sojourned in Egypt and in the land of Canaan, was four hundred and thirty years."

And in the Samaritan Bible we have: "The sojourning of the children of Israel and of their fathers, which they sojourned in the land of Canaan, and in the land of Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years."

There were seventy souls when they went down into Egypt, and they remained two hundred and fifteen years, and at the end of that time they had increased to about three million. How do we know that there were three million at the end of two hundred and fifteen years? We know it because we are informed by Moses that "there were six hundred thousand men of war." Now, to each man of war there must have been at least five other people. In every State in this Union there will be to each voter five other persons at least, and we all know that there are always more voters than men of war. If there were six hundred thousand men of war, there must have been a population of at least three million. Is it possible that seventy people could increase to that extent in two hundred and fifteen years? You may say that it was a miracle; but what need was there of working a miracle? Why should God miraculously increase the number of slaves? If he wished miraculously to increase the population, why did he not wait until the people were free?

In 1776 we had in the American

Colonies about three million of people. In one hundred years we doubled four times : that is to say, six, twelve, twenty-four, forty-eight million—our present population.

We must not forget that during all these years there has been pouring into our country a vast stream of emigration, and that this, taken in connection with the fact that our country is productive beyond all others, gave us only four doubles in one hundred years. Admitting that the Hebrews increased as rapidly without emigration as we in this country have with it, we will give to them four doubles each century, commencing with seventy people, and they would have, at the end of two hundred years, a population of seventeen thousand nine hundred and twenty. Giving them another double for the odd fifteen years, and there would be, provided no deaths had occurred, thirty-five thousand eight hundred and forty people. And yet we are told that, instead of having this number, they had increased to such an extent that they had six hundred thousand men of war—that is to say, a population of more than three million!

Every sensible man knows that this account is not and cannot be true. We know that seventy people could not increase to three million in two hundred and fifteen years.

About this time the Hebrews took a census, and found that there were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three first-born males. It is reasonable to suppose that there were about as many first-born females. This would make forty-four thousand five hundred and forty-six first-born children. Now, there must have been about as many mothers as there were first-born children. If there were only about forty-five thousand mothers and three million of people, the mothers must have had on an average about sixty-six children apiece.

At this time the Hebrews were slaves, and had been for two hundred and fifteen years. A little while before an order had been made by the Egyptians

that all the male children of the Hebrews should be killed. One, contrary to this order, was saved in an ark made of bull-rushes daubed with slime. This child was found by the daughter of Pharaoh, and was adopted, it seems, as her own, and, maybe, was. He grew to be a man, sided with the Hebrews, killed an Egyptian that was smiting a slave, hid the body in the sand, and fled from Egypt to the land of Midian, became acquainted with a priest who had seven daughters, took the side of the daughters against the ill-mannered shepherds of that country, and married Zipporah, one of the girls, and became a shepherd for her father. Afterwards, while tending his flock, the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush, and commanded him to go to the king of Egypt and demand from him the liberation of the Hebrews. In order to convince him that the something burning in the bush was actually God, the rod in his hand was changed into a serpent, which, upon being caught by the tail, became again a rod. Moses was also told to put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out it was as leprous as snow. Quite a number of strange things were performed, and others promised. Moses then agreed to go back to Egypt, provided his brother could go with him. Whereupon the Lord appeared to Aaron, and directed him to meet Moses in the Wilderness. They met at the mount of God, went to Egypt, gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel, spake all the words which God had spoken unto Moses, and did all the signs in the sight of the people. The Israelites believed, bowed their heads, and worshipped; and Moses and Aaron went in and told their message to Pharaoh the king.

XXII.—THE PLAGUES.

Three million of people were in slavery. They were treated with the utmost rigour, and so fearful were their masters that they might, in time, increase in numbers sufficient to avenge themselves that they took from the arms of

mothers all the male children and destroyed them. If the account given is true, the Egyptians were the most cruel, heartless, and infamous people of which history gives any record. God finally made up his mind to free the Hebrews ; and for the accomplishment of this purpose he sent, as his agents, Moses and Aaron to the king of Egypt. In order that the king might know that these men had a divine mission, God gave Moses the power of changing a stick into a serpent and water into blood. Moses and Aaron went before the king, stating that the Lord God of Israel ordered the king of Egypt to let the Hebrews go, that they might hold a feast with God in the wilderness. Thereupon Pharaoh, the king, inquired who the Lord was, at the same time stating that he had never made his acquaintance, and knew nothing about him. To this they replied that the God of the Hebrews had met with them, and they asked to go a three-days' journey into the desert and sacrifice unto this God, fearing that, if they did not, he would fall upon them with pestilence or the sword. This interview seems to have hardened Pharaoh, for he ordered the tasks of the children of Israel to be increased ; so that the only effect of the first appeal was to render still worse the condition of the Hebrews. Thereupon Moses returned unto the Lord, and said : " Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people ? Why is it that thou hast sent me ? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name he hath done evil to his people ; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all."

Apparently stung by this reproach, God answered : " Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh ; for with a strong hand shall he let them go ; and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land."

God then recounts the fact that he had appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; that he had established a covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan ; that he had heard the groanings of the children of Israel in

Egyptian bondage ; that their groanings had put him in mind of his covenant ; and that he had made up his mind to redeem the children of Israel with a stretched-out arm and with great judgments. Moses then spoke to the children of Israel again ; but they would listen to him no more. His first effort in their behalf had simply doubled their trouble, and they seemed to have lost confidence in his power. Thereupon Jehovah promised Moses that he would make him a god unto Pharaoh, and that Aaron should be his prophet ; but, at the same time, informed him that his message would be of no avail ; that he would harden the heart of Pharaoh so that he would not listen ; that he would so harden his heart that he might have an excuse for destroying the Egyptians. Accordingly, Moses and Aaron again went before Pharaoh. Moses said to Aaron : " Cast down your rod before Pharaoh"—which he did, and it became a serpent.

Then Pharaoh, not in the least surprised, called for his wise men and his sorcerers, and they threw down their rods and changed them into serpents. The serpent that had been changed from Aaron's rod was, at this time, crawling upon the floor, and it proceeded to swallow up the serpents that had been produced by the magicians of Egypt. What became of these serpents that were swallowed, and whether they turned back into sticks again, is not stated. Can we believe that the stick was changed into a real living serpent, or did it simply assume the appearance of a serpent ? If it bore only the appearance of a serpent, it was a deception, and could not rise above the dignity of legerdemain. Is it necessary to believe that God is a kind of prestidigitateur—a sleight-of-hand performer, a magician or sorcerer ? Can it be possible that an infinite being would endeavour to secure the liberation of a race by performing a miracle that could be equally performed by the sorcerers and magicians of a barbarian king ?

Not one word was said by Moses or Aaron as to the wickedness of depriving

a human being of his liberty. Not a word was said in favour of liberty. Not the slightest intimation that a human being was justly entitled to the product of his own labour. Not a word about the cruelty of masters who would destroy even the babes of slave mothers. It seems to me wonderful that this God did not tell the king of Egypt that no nation could enslave another without also enslaving itself; that it was impossible to put a chain around the limbs of a slave without putting manacles upon the brain of the master. Why did he not tell him that a nation founded upon slavery could not stand? Instead of declaring these things, instead of appealing to justice, to mercy, and to liberty, he resorted to feats of jugglery. Suppose we wished to make a treaty with a barbarous nation, and the President should employ a sleight-of-hand performer as envoy extraordinary, and instruct him that when he came into the presence of the savage monarch he should cast down an umbrella or a walking-stick, which would change into a lizard or a turtle; what should we think? Should we not regard such a performance as beneath the dignity even of a President? And what would be our feelings if the savage king sent for his sorcerers and had them perform the same feat? If such things would appear puerile and foolish in the President of a great Republic, what shall be said when they were resorted to by the Creator of all worlds? How small, how contemptible, such a God appears! Pharaoh, it seems, took about this view of the matter, and he would not be persuaded that such tricks were performed by an infinite being.

Again, Moses and Aaron came before Pharaoh as he was going to the river's bank, and the same rod which had changed to a serpent, and by this time changed back, was taken by Aaron, who, in the presence of Pharaoh, smote the water of the river, which was immediately turned to blood, as well as all the water in all the streams, ponds, and

pools, and all water in vessels of wood and vessels of stone in the entire land of Egypt. As soon as all the waters in Egypt had been turned into blood, the magicians of that country did the same with their enchantments. We are not informed where they got the water to turn into blood, since all the water in Egypt had already been changed. It seems from the account that the fish in the Nile died, and the river emitted a stench, and there was not a drop of water in the land of Egypt that had not been changed into blood. In consequence of this, the Egyptians digged "round about the river" for water to drink. Can we believe this story? Is it necessary to salvation to admit that all the rivers, pools, ponds, and lakes of a country were changed into blood, in order that a king might be induced to allow the children of Israel the privilege of going a three days' journey into the wilderness to make sacrifices to their God?

It seems from the account that Pharaoh was told that the God of the Hebrews would, if he refused to let the Israelites go, change all the waters of Egypt into blood, and that, upon his refusal, they were so changed. This had, however, no influence upon him, for the reason that his own magicians did the same. It does not appear that Moses and Aaron expressed the least surprise at the success of the Egyptian sorcerers. At that time it was believed that each nation had its own god. The only claim that Moses and Aaron made for their God was that he was the greatest and most powerful of all the gods, and that with anything like an equal chance he could vanquish the deity of any other nation.

After the waters were changed to blood, Moses and Aaron waited for seven days. At the end of that time God told Moses to again go to Pharaoh and demand the release of his people, and inform him that, if he refused, God would strike all the borders of Egypt with frogs—that he would make frogs so plentiful that they would go into the

houses of Pharaoh, into his bedchamber, upon his bed, into the houses of his servants, upon his people, into their ovens, and even into their kneading-troughs. This threat had no effect whatever upon Pharaoh; and thereupon Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land. The magicians of Egypt did the same, and with their enchantments brought more frogs upon the land of Egypt.

These magicians do not seem to have been original in their ideas, but, so far as imitation was concerned, were perfect masters of their art. The frogs seem to have made such an impression upon Pharaoh that he sent for Moses and asked him to entreat the Lord that he would take away the frogs. Moses agreed to remove them from the houses and the land, and allow them to remain only in the rivers. Accordingly the frogs died out of the houses, and out of the villages, and out of the fields, and the people gathered them together in heaps. As soon as the frogs had left the houses and fields, the heart of Pharaoh became again hardened, and he refused to let the people go.

Aaron then, according to the command of God, stretched out his hand, holding the rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man and in beast, and all the dust became lice throughout the land of Egypt. Pharaoh again sent for his magicians, and they sought to do the same with their enchantments, but they could not. Whereupon the sorcerers said unto Pharaoh: "This is the finger of God."

Notwithstanding this, however, Pharaoh refused to let the Hebrews go. God then caused a grievous swarm of flies to come into the house of Pharaoh and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt, to such an extent that the whole land was corrupted by reason of the flies. But into the part of the country occupied by the children of Israel there came no flies. Thereupon Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and

said to them: "Go, and sacrifice to your God in this land." They were not willing to sacrifice in Egypt, and asked permission to go on a journey of three days into the wilderness. To this Pharaoh acceded, and in consideration of this Moses agreed to use his influence with the Lord to induce him to send the flies out of the country. He accordingly told the Lord of the bargain he had made with Pharaoh, and the Lord agreed to the compromise, and removed the flies from Pharaoh and from his servants and from his people, and there remained not a single fly in the land of Egypt. As soon as the flies were gone, Pharaoh again changed his mind, and concluded not to permit the children of Israel to depart. The Lord then directed Moses to go to Pharaoh and tell him that, if he did not allow the children of Israel to depart, he would destroy his cattle, his horses, camels, and his sheep; that these animals would be afflicted with a grievous disease, but that the animals belonging to the Hebrews should not be so afflicted. Moses did as he was bid. On the next day all the cattle of Egypt died; that is to say, all the horses, all the asses, all the camels, all the oxen, and all the sheep; but of the animals owned by the Israelites not one perished. This disaster had no effect upon Pharaoh, and he still refused to let the children of Israel go. The Lord then told Moses and Aaron to take some ashes out of a furnace, and told Moses to sprinkle them towards the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh, saying that the ashes should become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and should be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beasts throughout all the land.

How these boils breaking out with blains, upon cattle that were already dead, should affect Pharaoh, is a little hard to understand. It must not be forgotten that all the cattle and all the beasts had died with the murrain before the boils had broken out.

This was a most decisive victory for Moses and Aaron. The boils were upon

the magicians to that extent that they could not stand before Moses. But it had no effect upon Pharaoh, who seems to have been a man of great firmness. The Lord then instructed Moses to get up early in the morning and tell Pharaoh that he would stretch out his hand and smite his people with a pestilence, and would, on the morrow, cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as had never been known in the land of Egypt. He also told Moses to give notice, so that they might get all the cattle that were in the fields under cover. It must be remembered that all these cattle had recently died of the murrain, and their bodies had been covered with boils and blains. This, however, had no effect, and Moses stretched forth his hand towards heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail and lightning and fire that ran along the ground, and the hail fell upon all the land of Egypt, and all that were in the fields, both man and beast, were smitten, and the hail smote every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the country except that portion inhabited by the children of Israel; there, there was no hail.

During this hailstorm Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and admitted that he had sinned, that the Lord was righteous, and that the Egyptians were wicked, and requested them to ask the Lord that there be no more thunderings and hail, and that he would let the Hebrews go. Moses agreed that as soon as he got out of the city he would stretch forth his hands unto the Lord, and that the thunderings should cease and the hail should stop. But when the rain and hail and the thundering ceased, Pharaoh concluded that he would not let the children of Israel go.

Again God sent Moses and Aaron, instructing them to tell Pharaoh that, if he refused to let the people go, the face of the earth would be covered with locusts, so that man would not be able to see the ground, and that these locusts would eat the residue of that which escaped from the hail; that they would

eat every tree out of the field; that they would fill the houses of Pharaoh and the houses of all his servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians. Moses delivered his message, and went out from Pharaoh. Some of Pharaoh's servants entreated their master to let the children of Israel go. Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and asked them who wished to go into the wilderness to sacrifice. They replied that they wished to go, with their young and old; with their sons and daughters, with flocks and herds. Pharaoh would not consent to this, but agreed that the men might go. Thereupon Pharaoh drove Moses and Aaron out of his sight. Then God told Moses to stretch forth his hand upon the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they might come up and eat every herb, even all that the hail had left. "And Moses stretched out his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind all that day and all that night; and when it was morning the east wind brought the locusts; and they came up over all the land of Egypt and rested upon all the coasts covering the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every herb and all the fruit of the tree which the hail had left, and there remained not any green thing on the trees or herbs in the field throughout the land of Egypt." Pharaoh then called for Moses and Aaron in great haste, admitted that he had sinned against the Lord their God and against them, asked their forgiveness, and requested them to intercede with God that he might take away the locusts. They went out from his presence, and asked the Lord to drive the locusts away, "And the Lord made a strong west wind which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea, so that there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt."

As soon as the locusts were gone Pharaoh changed his mind, and, in the language of the sacred text, "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let the children of Israel go."

The Lord then told Moses to stretch

out his hand toward heaven that there might be darkness over the land of Egypt, "even darkness which might be felt." "And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven, and there was a thick darkness over the land of Egypt for three days, during which time they saw not each other, neither arose any of the people from their places for three days; but the children of Israel had light in their dwellings."

It strikes me that when the land of Egypt was covered with thick darkness—so thick that it could be felt—and when light was in the dwellings of the Israelites, there could have been no better time for the Hebrews to have left the country.

Pharaoh again called for Moses, and told him that his people could go and serve the Lord, provided they would leave their flocks and herds. Moses would not agree to this, for the reason that they needed the flocks and herds for sacrifices and burnt-offerings, and he did not know how many of the animals God might require, and for that reason he could not leave a single hoof. Upon the question of the cattle they divided, and Pharaoh again refused to let the people go. God then commanded Moses to tell the Hebrews to borrow, each of his neighbour, jewels of silver and gold. By a miraculous interposition, the Hebrews found favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they loaned the articles asked for. After this, Moses again went to Pharaoh and told him that all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh upon the throne unto the first-born of the maid-servant who was behind the mill, as well as the first-born of beasts, should die.

As all the beasts had been destroyed by disease and hail, it is troublesome to understand the meaning of the threat as to their first-born.

Preparations were accordingly made for carrying this frightful threat into execution. Blood was put on the door-posts of all houses inhabited by Hebrews, so that God, as he passed through that

land, might not be mistaken and destroy the first-born of the Jews. "And it came to pass that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on the throne, and the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead."

What had these children done? Why should the babes in the cradle be destroyed on account of the crime of Pharaoh? Why should the cattle be destroyed because man had enslaved his brother? In those days women and children and cattle were put upon an exact equality, and were all considered as the property of the men; and, when men in some way excited the wrath of God, he punished them by destroying all their cattle, their wives, and their little ones. Where can words be found bitter enough to describe a God who would kill wives and babes because husbands and fathers had failed to keep his law? Every good man and every good woman must hate and despise such a deity.

Upon the death of all the first-born, Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and not only gave his consent that they might go with the Hebrews into the wilderness, but besought them to go at once.

Is it possible that an infinite God, creator of all worlds and sustainer of all life, said to Pharaoh: "If you do not let my people go, I will turn all the water of your country into blood," and that, upon the refusal of Pharaoh to release the people, God did turn all the waters into blood? Do you believe this?

Do you believe that Pharaoh, even after all the water was turned to blood, refused to let the Hebrews go, and that thereupon God told him he would cover his land with frogs? Do you believe this?

Do you believe that after the land was covered with frogs Pharaoh still refused to let the people go, and that God then said to him, "I will cover you and all your

people with lice"? Do you believe God would make this threat?

Do you also believe that God told Pharaoh: "If you do not let these people go, I will fill all your houses and cover your country with flies"? Do you believe God makes such threats as this?

Of course, God must have known that turning the waters into blood, covering the country with frogs, infesting all flesh with lice, and filling all houses with flies, would not accomplish his object, and that all these plagues would have no effect whatever upon the Egyptian king.

Do you believe that, failing to accomplish anything by flies, God told Pharaoh that, if he did not let the people go, he would kill his cattle with murrain? Does such a threat sound God-like?

Do you believe that, failing to effect anything by killing the cattle, this same God then threatened to afflict all the people with boils, including the magicians who had been rivalling him in the matter of miracles; and, failing to do anything by boils, that he resorted to hail? Does this sound reasonable? The hail experiment having accomplished nothing, do you believe that God murdered the first-born of animals and men? Is it possible to conceive of anything more utterly absurd, stupid, revolting, cruel, and senseless than the miracles said to have been wrought by the Almighty for the purpose of inducing Pharaoh to liberate the children of Israel?

Is it not altogether more reasonable to say that the Jewish people, being in slavery, accounted for the misfortunes and calamities suffered by the Egyptians by saying that they were the judgments of God?

When the Armada of Spain was wrecked and scattered by the storm, the English people believed that God had interposed in their behalf, and publicly gave thanks. When the battle of Lepanto was won, it was believed by the Catholic world that the victory was given in answer to prayer. So our forefathers in their revolutionary struggle saw, or thought they saw, the hand of God, and

most firmly believed that they achieved their independence by the interposition of the Most High.

Now, it may be that, while the Hebrews were enslaved by the Egyptians, there were plagues of locusts and flies. It may be that there were some diseases by which many of the cattle perished. It may be that a pestilence visited that country, so that in nearly every house there was some one dead. If so, it was but natural for the enslaved and superstitious Jews to account for these calamities by saying that they were punishments sent by their God. Such ideas will be found in the history of every country.

For a long time the Jews held these opinions, and they were handed from father to son simply by tradition. By the time a written language had been produced, thousands of additions had been made, and numberless details invented; so that we have not only an account of the plagues suffered by the Egyptians, but the whole woven into a connected story, containing the threats made by Moses and Aaron, the miracles wrought by them, the promises of Pharaoh, and finally the release of the Hebrews, as a result of the marvellous things performed in their behalf by Jehovah.

In any event, it is infinitely more probable that the author was misinformed than that the God of this universe was guilty of these childish, heartless, and infamous things. The solution of the whole matter is this: Moses was mistaken.

XXIII.—THE FLIGHT.

Three million of people, with their flocks and herds, with borrowed jewellery and raiment, with unleavened dough in kneading troughs bound in their clothes upon their shoulders, in one night commenced their journey for the land of promise. We are not told how they were informed of the precise time to start. With all the modern appliances, it would require a long time to inform three millions of people of any fact.

In this vast assemblage there were six hundred thousand men of war, and with them were the old, the young, the diseased, and helpless. Where were those people going? They were going to the desert of Sinai, compared with which Sahara is a garden. Imagine an ocean of lava torn by storm and vexed by tempest, suddenly gazed at by a Gorgon, and changed instantly to stone! Such was the desert of Sinai.

All of the civilised nations of the world could not feed and support three millions of people on the desert for forty years. It would cost more than one hundred thousand millions of dollars, and would bankrupt Christendom. They had with them their flocks and herds, and the sheep were so numerous that the Israelites sacrificed, at one time, more than one hundred and fifty thousand first-born lambs. How were these flocks supported? Where were meadows and pastures for them? There was no grass, no forests—nothing! There is no account of its having rained baled hay, nor is it even claimed that they were miraculously fed. To support these flocks, millions of acres of pastures would have been required. God did not take the Israelites through the land of the Philistines, for fear that when they saw the people of that country they would return to Egypt; but he took them by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea, going before them by day in a pillar of cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire.

When it was told Pharaoh that the people had fled, he made ready, and took six hundred chosen chariots of Egypt, and pursued after the children of Israel, overtaking them by the sea. As all the animals had long before that time been destroyed, we are not informed where Pharaoh obtained the horses for his chariots. The moment the children of Israel saw the hosts of Pharaoh, although they had six hundred thousand men of war, they immediately cried unto the Lord for protection. It is wonderful to me that a land that had been ravaged by the plagues described in the Bible still

had the power to put in the field an army that would carry terror to the hearts of six hundred thousand men of war. Even with the help of God, it seems, they were not strong enough to meet the Egyptians in the open field, but resorted to strategy. Moses again stretched forth his wonderful rod over the waters of the Red Sea, and they were divided, and the Hebrews passed through on dry land, the waters standing up like a wall on either side. The Egyptians pursued them; "and in the morning watch the Lord looked into the hosts of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire," and proceeded to take the wheels off their chariots. As soon as the wheels were off, God told Moses to stretch out his hand over the sea. Moses did so, and immediately "the waters returned and covered the chariots and horsemen and all the hosts of Pharaoh that came into the sea, and there remained not so much as one of them."

This account may be true, but still it hardly looks reasonable that God would take the wheels off the chariots. How did he do it? Did he pull out the linchpins, or did he just take them off by main force?

What a picture this presents to the mind! God, the creator of the universe, maker of every shining, glittering star, engaged in pulling off the wheels of waggons, that he might convince Pharaoh of his greatness and power.

Where were these people going? They were going to the promised land. How large a country was that? About twelve thousand square miles—about one-fifth the size of the State of Illinois. It was a frightful country, covered with rocks and desolation. How many people were in the promised land already? Moses tells us there were seven nations in that country mightier than the Jews. As there were at least three millions of Jews, there must have been at least twenty-one millions of people already in that country. These had to be driven out in order that room might be made for the chosen people of

God. It seems, however, that God was not willing to take the children of Israel into the promised land immediately. They were not fit to inhabit the land of Canaan; so he made up his mind to allow them to wander in the desert until all who had left Egypt, except two, should perish. Of all the slaves released from Egyptian bondage, only two were allowed to reach the promised land.

As soon as the Hebrews crossed the Red Sea, they found themselves without food, and with water unfit to drink by reason of its bitterness, and they began to murmur against Moses, who cried unto the Lord, and "the Lord showed him a tree." Moses cast this tree into the waters, and they became sweet. "And it came to pass in the morning the dew lay around about the camp; and when the dew that lay was gone, behold, upon the face of the wilderness lay a small round thing, small as the hoar-frost upon the ground. And Moses said unto them, this is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat." This manna was a very peculiar thing. It would melt in the sun, and yet they could cook it by seething and baking. One would as soon think of frying snow or of broiling icicles. But this manna had another remarkable quality. No matter how much or little any person gathered, he would have an exact omer; if he gathered more, it would shrink to that amount, and if he gathered less, it would swell exactly to that amount. What a magnificent substance manna would be with which to make a currency—shrinking and swelling according to the great laws of supply and demand!

"Upon this manna the children of Israel lived for forty years, until they came to a habitable land. With this meat were they fed until they reached the borders of the land of Canaan." We are told in the twenty-first chapter of Numbers that the people at last became tired of the manna, complained of God, and asked Moses why he brought them out of the land of Egypt to die in the wilderness. And they said: "There is

no bread, nor have we any water. Our soul loatheth this light food."

We are told by some commentators that the Jews lived on manna for forty years; by others that they lived upon it for only a short time. As a matter of fact, the accounts differ, and this difference is the opportunity for commentators. It also allows us to exercise faith in believing that both accounts are true. If the accounts agreed and were reasonable, they would be believed by the wicked and unregenerated. But as they are different and unreasonable, they are believed only by the good. Whenever a statement in the Bible is unreasonable, and you believe it, you are considered quite a good Christian. If the statement is grossly absurd and infinitely impossible, and you still believe it, you are a saint.

The children of Israel were in the desert, and they were out of water. They had nothing to eat but manna, and this they had had so long that the soul of every person abhorred it. Under these circumstances they complained to Moses. Now, as God is infinite, he could just as well have furnished them with an abundance of the purest and coolest of water, and could, without the slightest trouble to himself, have given them three excellent meals a day, with a generous variety of meats and vegetables. It is very hard to see why he did not do so. It is still harder to conceive why he fell into a rage when the people mildly suggested that they would like a change of diet. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, nothing but manna. No doubt they did the best they could by cooking it in different ways; but, in spite of themselves, they began to loathe its sight and taste, and so they asked Moses to use his influence to secure a change in the bill of fare.

Now, I ask whether it was unreasonable for the Jews to suggest that a little meat would be very gratefully received? It seems, however, that as soon as the request was made, this God of infinite mercy became infinitely enraged, and, instead of granting it, went into partnership

with serpents, for the purpose of punishing the hungry wretches to whom he had promised a land flowing with milk and honey.

Where did these serpents come from? How did God convey the information to the serpents that he wished them to go to the desert of Sinai and bite some Jews? It may be urged that these serpents were created for the express purpose of punishing the children of Israel for having had the presumption, like Oliver Twist, to ask for more.

There is another account in the eleventh chapter of Numbers of the people murmuring because of their food. They remembered the fish, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic of Egypt, and they asked for meat. The people went to the tent of Moses and asked him for flesh. Moses cried unto the Lord, and asked him why he did not take care of the multitude. God thereupon agreed that they should have meat, not for a day or two, but for a month, until the meat should come out of their nostrils and become loathsome to them. He then caused a wind to bring quails from beyond the sea, and cast them into the camp, on every side of the camp around about for the space of a day's journey. And the people gathered them, and while the flesh was yet between their teeth the wrath of God, being provoked against them, struck them with an exceeding great plague. Serpents, also, were sent among them, and thousands perished for the crime of having been hungry.

The Rev. Alexander Cruden, commenting upon this account, says: "God caused a wind to rise that drove the quails within and about the camp of the Israelites; and it is in this that the miracle consists, that they were brought so seasonably to this place, and in so great numbers, as to suffice above a million of persons above a month. Some authors affirm that in those eastern and southern countries quails are innumerable, so that in one part of Italy within the compass of five miles there were

taken about a hundred thousand of them every day for a month together; and that sometimes they fly so thick over the sea that, being weary, they fall into ships, sometimes in such numbers that they sink them with their weight." No wonder Mr. Cruden believed the Mosaic account.

Must we believe that God made an arrangement with hornets for the purpose of securing their services in driving the Canaanites from the land of promise? Is this belief necessary unto salvation? Must we believe that God said to the Jews that he would send hornets before them to drive out the Canaanites, as related in the twenty-third chapter of Exodus and the seventh chapter of Deuteronomy? How would the hornets know a Canaanite? In what way would God put it in the mind of a hornet to attack a Canaanite? Did God create hornets for that especial purpose, implanting an instinct to attack a Canaanite, but not a Hebrew? Can we conceive of the Almighty granting letters of marque and reprisal to hornets? Of course, it is admitted that nothing in the world would be better calculated to make a man leave his native land than a few hornets. Is it possible for us to believe that an infinite being would resort to such expedients in order to drive the Canaanites from their country? He could just as easily have spoken the Canaanites out of existence as to have spoken the hornets in. In this way a vast amount of trouble, pain, and suffering would have been saved. Is it possible that there is in this country an intelligent clergyman who will insist that these stories are true; that we must believe them in order to be good people in this world, and glorified souls in the next?

We are also told that God instructed the Hebrews to kill the Canaanites slowly, giving as a reason that the beasts of the field might increase upon his chosen people. When we take into consideration the fact that the Holy Land contained only about eleven or twelve thousand square miles, and was at that time

inhabited by at least twenty-one millions of people, it does not seem reasonable that the wild beasts could have been numerous enough to cause any great alarm. The same ratio of population would give to the State of Illinois at least one hundred and twenty millions of inhabitants. Can anybody believe that, under these circumstances, the danger from wild beasts could be very great? What would we think of a general, invading such a State, if he should order his soldiers to kill the people slowly lest the wild beasts might increase upon them? Is it possible that a God capable of doing the miracles recounted in the Old Testament could not, in some way, have disposed of the wild beasts? After the Canaanites were driven out, could he not have employed the hornets to drive out the wild beasts? Think of a God that could drive twenty-one millions of people out of the promised land, could raise up innumerable stinging-flies, and could cover the earth with fiery serpents, and yet seems to have been perfectly powerless against the wild beasts of the land of Canaan!

Speaking of these hornets, one of the good old commentators, whose views have long been considered of great value by the believers in the inspiration of the Bible, uses the following language:—"Hornets are a sort of strong flies, which the Lord used as instruments to plague the enemies of his people. They are of themselves very troublesome and mischievous, and those the Lord made use of were, it is thought, of an extraordinary bigness and perniciousness. It is said they live as the wasps, and that they have a king or captain, and pestilent stings as bees, and that, if twenty-seven of them sting man or beast, it is certain death to either. Nor is it strange that such creatures did drive out the Canaanites from their habitations; for many heathen writers give instances of some people driven from their seats by frogs, others by mice, others by bees and wasps. And it is said that a Christian city, being besieged by Saporess, King of

Persia, was delivered by hornets; for the elephants and beasts, being stung by them, waxed unruly, and so the whole army fled."

Only a few years ago all such stories were believed by the Christian world; and it is an historical fact that Voltaire was the third man of any note in Europe who took the ground that the mythologies of Greece and Rome were without foundation. Until his time most Christians believed as thoroughly in the miracles ascribed to the Greek and Roman gods as in those of Christ and Jehovah. The Christian world cultivated credulity, not only as one of the virtues, but as the greatest of them all. But when Luther and his followers left the Church of Rome, they were compelled to deny the power of the Catholic Church at that time to suspend the laws of nature; but took the ground that such power ceased with the apostolic age. They insisted that all things now happened in accordance with the laws of nature, with the exception of a few special interferences in favour of the Protestant Church in answer to prayer. They taught their children a double philosophy: by one they were to show the impossibility of Catholic miracles, because opposed to the laws of nature; by the other the probability of the miracles of the apostolic age, because they were in conformity with the statement of the Scriptures. They had two foundations: one the law of nature, and the other the word of God. The Protestants have endeavoured to carry on this double process of reasoning, and the result has been a gradual increase of confidence in the law of nature, and a gradual decrease of confidence in the word of God.

We are told, in this inspired account, that the clothing of the Jewish people did not wax old, and that their shoes refused to wear out. Some commentators have insisted that angels attended to the wardrobes of the Hebrews, patched their garments, and mended their shoes. Certain it is, however, that the same clothes lasted them for forty years

during the entire journey from Egypt to the Holy Land. Little boys starting out with their first pantaloons grew as they travelled, and their clothes grew with them.

Can it be necessary to believe a story like this? Will men make better husbands, fathers, neighbours, and citizens, simply by giving credence to these childish and impossible things? Certainly an infinite God could have transported the Jews to the Holy Land in a moment, and could as easily have removed the Canaanites to some other country. Surely there was no necessity for doing thousands and thousands of petty miracles, day after day for forty years, looking after the clothes of three millions of people, changing the nature of wool, and linen, and leather, so they would not "wax old." Every step, every motion, would wear away some part of the clothing, some part of the shoes. Were these parts, so worn away, perpetually renewed, or was the nature of things so changed that they could not wear away? We know that whenever matter comes in contact with matter certain atoms are lost by abrasion. Were these atoms gathered up every night by angels, and replaced on the soles of the shoes, on the elbows of coats, and on the knees of pantaloons, so that the next morning they would be precisely in the condition they were on the morning before? There must be a mistake somewhere.

Can we believe that the real God, if there is one, ever ordered a man to be killed simply for making hair oil or ointment? We are told in the thirteenth chapter of Exodus that the Lord commanded Moses to take myrrh, cinnamon, sweet calamus, cassia and olive oil, and make a holy ointment for the purpose of anointing the tabernacle, tables, candlesticks, and other utensils, as well as Aaron and his sons; saying, at the same time, that whosoever compounded any like it, or whoever put any of it on a stranger, should be put to death. In the same chapter the Lord furnishes

Moses with a recipe for making a perfume, saying that whoever should make any which smelled like it should be cut off from his people. This, to me, sounds so unreasonable that I cannot believe it. Why should an infinite God care whether mankind made ointments and perfumes like his or not? Why should the Creator of all things threaten to kill a priest who approached his altar without having washed his hands and feet? These commandments and these penalties would disgrace the vainest tyrant that ever sat by chance upon a throne. There must be some mistake. I cannot believe that an infinite intelligence appeared to Moses upon Mount Sinai, having with him a variety of patterns for making a tabernacle, tongs, snuffers, and dishes. Neither can I believe that God told Moses how to cut and trim a coat for a priest. Why should a God care about such things? Why should he insist on having buttons sewed in certain rows, and fringes of a certain colour? Suppose an intelligent civilised man was to overhear, on Sinai, the following instructions from God to Moses:—

"You must consecrate my priests as follows:—You must kill a bullock for a sin offering, and have Aaron and his sons lay their hands upon the head of the bullock. Then you must take the blood and put it upon the horns of the altar round about with your finger, and pour some at the bottom of the altar to make a reconciliation; and of the fat that is upon the inwards, the caul above the liver and two kidneys, and their fat, and burn them upon the altar. You must get a ram for a burnt offering, and Aaron and his sons must lay their hands upon the head of the ram. Then you must kill it and sprinkle the blood upon the altar, and cut the ram into pieces, and burn the head, and the pieces, and the fat, and wash the inwards and the lungs in water, and then burn the whole ram upon the altar for a sweet savour unto me. Then you must get another ram, and have Aaron and his

sons lay their hands upon the head of that, then kill it and take of its blood, and put it on the top of Aaron's right ear, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot. And you must also put a little of the blood upon the top of the right ears of Aaron's sons, and on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the great toes of their right feet. And then you must take of the fat that is on the inwards, and the caul above the liver and the two kidneys, and their fat, and the right shoulder, and out of a basket of unleavened bread you must take one unleavened cake and another of oil bread, and one wafer, and put them on the fat of the right shoulder. And you must take of the anointing oil, and of the blood, and sprinkle it on Aaron, and on his garments, and on his sons' garments, and sanctify them and all their clothes." Do you believe that he would have even suspected that the Creator of the universe was talking?

Can anyone now tell why God commanded the Jews, when they were upon the desert of Sinai, to plant trees, telling them at the same time that they must not eat any of the fruit of such trees until after the fourth year? Trees could not have been planted in that desert, and if they had been they could not have lived. Why did God tell Moses, while in the desert, to make curtains of fine linen? Where could he have obtained his flax? There was no land upon which it could have been produced. Why did he tell him to make things of gold, and silver, and precious stones, when they could not have been in possession of these things? There is but one answer, and that is, the Pentateuch was written hundreds of years after the Jews had settled in the Holy Land, and hundreds of years after Moses was dust and ashes.

When the Jews had a written language—and that must have been long after their flight from Egypt—they wrote out their history and their laws. Tradition had filled the infancy of the nation with

miracles and special interpositions in their behalf by Jehovah. Patriotism would not allow these wonders to grow small, and priestcraft never denied a miracle. There were traditions to the effect that God had spoken face to face with Moses; that he had given him the tables of the law, and had, in a thousand ways, made known his will; and whenever the priests wished to make new laws, or amend old ones, they pretended to have found something more that God said to Moses at Sinai. In this way obedience was more easily secured. Only a very few of the people could read, and, as a consequence, additions, interpolations, and erasures escaped detection. In this way we account for the fact that Moses is made to speak of things that did not exist in his day, and were unknown for hundreds of years after his death.

In the thirtieth chapter of Exodus we are told that the people when numbered must give each one a half shekel after the shekel of the *sanctuary*. At that time no such money existed, and consequently the account could not, by any possibility, have been written until after there was a shekel of the sanctuary, and there was no such thing until long after the death of Moses. If we should read that Cæsar paid his troops in pounds, shillings, and pence, we should certainly know that the account was not written by Cæsar, nor in his time, but we should know that it was written after the English had given these names to certain coins.

So we find that when the Jews were upon the desert it was commanded that every mother should bring, as a sin-offering, a couple of doves to the priests, and the priests were compelled to eat those doves in the most holy place. At the time this law appears to have been given there were three million people, and only three priests: Aaron, Eleazer, and Ithamar. Among three million people there would be at least three hundred births a day. Certainly we are not expected to believe that these three priests devoured

six hundred pigeons every twenty-four hours.

Why should a woman ask pardon of God for having been a mother? Why should that be considered a crime in Exodus which is commanded as a duty in Genesis? Why should a mother be declared unclean? Why should giving birth to a daughter be regarded as twice as criminal as giving birth to a son? Can we believe that such laws and ceremonies were made and instituted by a merciful and intelligent God? If there is anything in this poor world suggestive of, and standing for, all that is sweet, loving, and pure, it is a mother holding in her thrilled and happy arms her prattling babe. Read the twelfth chapter of Leviticus, and you will see that when a woman became the mother of a boy she was so unclean that she was not allowed to touch a hallowed thing, nor to enter the sanctuary for forty days. If the baby was a girl, then the mother was unfit for eighty days to enter the house of God, or to touch the sacred tongs and snuffers. These laws, born of barbarism, are unworthy of our day, and should be regarded simply as the mistakes of savages.

Just as low in the scale of intelligence are the directions given in the fifth chapters of Numbers for the trial of a wife of whom the husband was jealous. This foolish chapter has been the foundation of all appeals to God for the ascertainment of facts, such as the corsned, trial by battle, by water, and by fire; the last of which is our judicial oath. It is very easy to believe that in those days a guilty woman would be afraid to drink the water of jealousy and take the oath, and that, through fear, she might be made to confess. Admitting that the deception tended not only to prevent crime, but to discover it when committed, still, we cannot admit that an honest God would, for any purpose, resort to dishonest means. In some countries fear is employed as a means of getting at the truth, and in this there is nothing dishonest, provided falsehood is not resorted to for

the purpose of producing the fear. Protestants laugh at Catholics because of their belief in the efficacy of holy water, and yet they teach their children that a little holy water, in which had been thrown some dust from the floor of the sanctuary, would work a miracle in a woman's flesh. For hundreds of years our fathers believed that a perjurer could not swallow a piece of sacramental bread. Such stories belong to the childhood of our race, and are now believed only by mental infants and intellectual babes.

I cannot believe that Moses had in his hands a couple of tables of stone, upon which God had written the Ten Commandments, and that when he saw the golden calf and the dancing he dashed the tables to the earth and broke them in pieces. Neither do I believe that Moses took a golden calf, burnt it, ground it to powder, and made the people drink it with water, as related in the thirty-second chapter of Exodus.

There is another account of the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses, in the nineteenth and twentieth chapters of Exodus. In this account not one word is said about the people having made a golden calf, nor about the breaking of the tables of stone. In the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus there is an account of the renewal of the broken tables of the law, and the commandments are given; but they are not the same commandments as those mentioned in the twentieth chapter. There are two accounts of the same transaction. Both of these stories cannot be true, and yet both must be believed. Anyone who will take the trouble to read the nineteenth and twentieth chapters, and the last verse of the thirty-first chapter, the thirty-second, thirty-third, and thirty-fourth chapters of Exodus, will be compelled to admit that both accounts cannot be true.

From the last account it appears that, while Moses was upon Mount Sinai receiving the commandments from God, the people brought their jewellery to Aaron, and he cast for them a golden calf. This happened before any command

against idolatry had been given. A god ought certainly to publish his laws before inflicting penalties for their violation. To inflict punishment for breaking unknown and unpublished laws is, in the last degree, cruel and unjust. It may be replied that the Jews knew better than to worship idols before the law was given. If this is so, why should the law have been given? In all civilised countries laws are made and promulgated, not simply for the purpose of informing the people as to what is right and wrong, but to inform them of the penalties to be visited upon those who violate the laws.

When the Ten Commandments were given, no penalties were attached. Not one word was written on the tables of stone as to the punishments that would be inflicted for breaking any or all of the inspired laws. The people should not have been punished for violating a commandment before it was given. And yet, in this case, Moses commanded the sons of Levi to take their swords and slay every man his brother, his companion, and his neighbour. The brutal order was obeyed, and three thousand men were butchered. The Levites consecrated themselves unto the Lord by murdering their sons and their brothers for having violated a commandment before it had been given.

It has been contended for many years that the Ten Commandments are the foundation of all ideas of justice and of law. Eminent jurists have bowed to popular prejudice, and deformed their works by statements to the effect that the Mosaic laws are the fountains from which sprang all ideas of right and wrong. Nothing can be more stupidly false than such assertions. Thousands of years before Moses was born the Egyptians had a code of laws. They had laws against blasphemy, murder, adultery, larceny, perjury; laws for the collection of debts, the enforcement of contracts, the ascertainment of damages, the redemption of property pawned, and upon nearly every subject of human interest.

The Egyptian code was far better than the Mosaic.

Laws spring from the instinct of self-preservation. Industry objected to supporting idleness, and laws were made against theft. Laws were made against murder, because a very large majority of the people have always objected to being murdered. All fundamental laws were born simply of the instinct of self-defence. Long before the Jewish savages assembled at the foot of Sinai, laws had been made and enforced, not only in Egypt and India, but by every tribe that ever existed.

It is impossible for human beings to exist together without certain rules of conduct, certain ideas of the proper and improper, of the right and wrong, growing out of the relation. Certain rules must be made, and must be enforced. This implies law, trial, and punishment. Whoever produces anything by weary labour does not need a revelation from heaven to teach him that he has a right to the thing produced. Not one of the learned gentlemen who pretend that the Mosaic laws are filled with justice and intelligence would live for a moment in any country where such laws were not in force.

Nothing can be more wonderful than the medical ideas of Jehovah. He had the strangest notions about the cause and cure of disease. With him everything was miracle and wonder. In the fourteenth chapter of Leviticus we find the law for cleansing a leper: "Then shall the priest take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop. And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an *earthen* vessel, over *running* water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them, and the living bird, in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy, seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let

the living bird loose into the open field."

We are told that God himself gave these directions to Moses. Does anybody believe this? Why should the bird be killed in an *earthen* vessel? Would the charm be broken if the vessel was of wood? Why over *running* water? What would be thought of a physician now who would give a prescription like that?

Is it not strange that God, although he gave hundreds of directions for the purpose of discovering the presence of leprosy, and for cleansing the leper after he was healed, forgot to tell how that disease could be cured? Is it not wonderful that, while God told his people what animals were fit for food, he failed to give a list of plants that man might eat? Why did he leave his children to find out the hurtful and poisonous by experiment, knowing that experiment, in millions of cases, must be death?

When reading the history of the Jewish people, of their flight from slavery to death, of their exchange of tyrants, I must confess that my sympathies are all aroused in their behalf. They were cheated, deceived, and abused. Their God was quick-tempered, unreasonable, cruel, revengeful, and dishonest. He was always promising, but never performed. He wasted time in ceremony and childish detail, and in the exaggeration of what he had done. It is impossible for me to conceive of a character more utterly detestable than that of the Hebrew God. He had solemnly promised the Jews that he would take them from Egypt to a land flowing with milk and honey. He had led them to believe that in a little while their troubles would be over, and that soon, in the land of Canaan, surrounded by their wives and little ones, they would forget the stripes and tears of Egypt. After promising the poor wanderers again and again that he would lead them in safety to the promised land of joy and plenty, this God, forgetting every promise, said to the

wretches in his power: "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and your children shall wander until your carcasses be wasted." This curse was the conclusion of the whole matter. Into this dust of death and night faded all the promises of God. Into this rottenness of wandering despair fell all the dreams of liberty and home. Millions of corpses were left to rot in the desert, and each one certified to the dishonesty of Jehovah. I cannot believe these things. They are so cruel and heartless that my blood is chilled and my sense of justice shocked. A book that is equally abhorrent to my head and heart cannot be accepted as a revelation from God.

When we think of the poor Jews destroyed, murdered, bitten by serpents, visited by plagues, decimated by famine, butchered by each other, swallowed by the earth, frightened, cursed, starved, deceived, robbed, and outraged, how thankful we should be that we are not the chosen people of God. No wonder that they longed for the slavery of Egypt, and remembered with sorrow the unhappy day when they exchanged masters. Compared with Jehovah, Pharaoh was a benefactor, and the tyranny of Egypt was freedom to those who suffered the despotism of God.

While reading the Pentateuch, I am filled with indignation, pity, and horror. Nothing can be sadder than the history of the starved and frightened wretches who wandered over the desolate crags and sands of wilderness and desert, the prey of famine, sword, and plague. Ignorant and superstitious to the last degree, governed by falsehood, plundered by hypocrisy, they were the sport of priests and the victims of fear. God was their greatest enemy, and death their only friend.

It is impossible to conceive of a more thoroughly despicable, hateful, and arrogant being than the Jewish God. He is without a redeeming feature. In the mythology of the world he has no parallel. He only is never touched by agony and tears. He delights only in

blood and pain. Human affections are naught to him. He cares neither for love nor music, beauty nor joy. A false friend, an unjust judge, a braggart, hypocrite, and tyrant; sincere in hatred, jealous, vain, and revengeful; false in promise, honest in curse, suspicious, ignorant, and changeable, infamous and hideous—such is the God of the Pentateuch.

XXIV.—CONFESS AND AVOID.

The scientific Christians now admit that the Bible is not inspired in its astronomy, geology, botany, zoology, nor in any science. In other words, they admit that on these subjects the Bible cannot be depended upon. If all the statements in the Scriptures were true, there would be no necessity for admitting that some of them are not inspired. A Christian will not admit that a passage in the Bible is uninspired until he is satisfied that it is untrue. Orthodoxy itself has at last been compelled to say that, while a passage may be true and uninspired, it cannot be inspired if false.

If the people of Europe had known as much of astronomy and geology when the Bible was introduced among them as they do now, there never could have been one believer in the doctrine of inspiration. If the writers of the various parts of the Bible had known as much about the sciences as is now known by every intelligent man, the book never could have been written. It was produced by ignorance, and has been believed and defended by its author. It has lost power in the proportion that man has gained knowledge. A few years ago this book was appealed to in the settlement of all scientific questions; but now even the clergy confess that in such matters it has ceased to speak with the voice of authority. For the establishment of facts the word of man is now considered far better than the word of God. In the world of science Jehovah was superseded by Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler. All that God told Moses, admitting the entire account to be true,

is dust and ashes compared to the discoveries of Descartes, La Place, and Humboldt. In matters of fact the Bible has ceased to be regarded as a standard. Science has succeeded in breaking the chains of theology. A few years ago science endeavoured to show that it was not inconsistent with the Bible. The tables have been turned, and now religion is endeavouring to prove that the Bible is not inconsistent with science. The standard has been changed.

For many ages the Christians contended that the Bible, viewed simply as a literary performance, was beyond all other books, and that man, without the assistance of God, could not produce its equal. This claim was made when but few books existed, and the Bible, being the only book generally known, had no rival. But this claim, like the other, has been abandoned by many, and soon will be by all. Compared with Shakespeare's "book and volume of the brain," the "sacred" Bible shrinks, and seems as feebly impotent and vain as would a pipe of Pan, when some great organ, voiced with every tone, from the hoarse thunder of the sea to the winged warble of the mated bird, floods and fills cathedral aisles with all the wealth of sound.

It is now maintained—and this appears to be the last fortification behind which the doctrine of inspiration skulks and crouches—that the Bible, although false and mistaken in its astronomy, geology, geography, history, and philosophy, is inspired in its morality. It is now claimed that, had it not been for this book, the world would have been inhabited only by savages, and that, had it not been for the holy Scriptures, man would never have even dreamed of the unity of God. It is claimed that belief in one God is a dogma of almost infinite importance—that without this belief civilisation is impossible, and that this fact is the sun around which all the virtues revolve. For my part, I think it infinitely more important to believe in man. Theology is a superstition—humanity a religion.

XXV.—“INSPIRED” SLAVERY.

Perhaps the Bible was inspired upon the subject of human slavery. Is there in the civilised world to-day a clergyman who believes in the divinity of slavery? Does the Bible teach man to enslave his brother? If he does, is it not blasphemous to say that it is inspired of God? If you find the institution of slavery upheld in a book said to have been written by God, what would you expect to find in a book inspired by the Devil? Would you expect to find that book in favour of liberty? Modern Christians, ashamed of the God of the Old Testament, endeavour now to show that slavery was neither commanded nor opposed by Jehovah. Nothing can be plainer than the following passages from Leviticus xxv.: “Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land; and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession. They shall be your bond-men for ever. Both thy bond-men and thy bond-maids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you. Of them shall ye buy bond-men and bond-maids.”

Can we believe in this, the nineteenth century, that these infamous passages were inspired by God? That God approved not only of human slavery, but instructed his chosen people to buy the women, children, and babes of the heathen round about them? If it was right for the Hebrews to buy, it was also right for the heathen to sell. This God, by commanding the Hebrews to buy, approved of the selling of sons and daughters. The Canaanites who, tempted by gold, lured by avarice, sold from the arms of his wife the dimpled babe, simply made it possible for the Hebrews to obey the orders of their God. If God is the author of the Bible, the reading of these passages ought to cover his cheeks with shame. I ask the Christian world

to-day, Was it right for the heathen to sell their children? Was it right for God not only to uphold, but to command, the infamous traffic in human flesh? Could the most revengeful fiend, the most malicious vagrant in the gloom of hell, sink to a lower moral depth than this?

According to this God, his chosen people were not only commanded to buy of the heathen round about them, but were also permitted to buy each other for a term of years. The law governing the purchase of Jews is laid down in the twenty-first chapter of Exodus: “If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years shall he serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl: and he shall serve him for ever.”

Do you believe that God was the author of this infamous law? Do you believe that the loving father of us all turned the dimpled arms of babes into manacles of iron? Do you believe that he baited the dungeon of servitude with wife and child? Is it possible to love a God who would make such laws? Is it possible not to hate and despise him?

The heathen are not spoken of as human beings. Their rights are never mentioned. They were the rightful food of the sword, and their bodies were made for stripes and chains.

In the same chapter of the same inspired book we are told that, “if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished, for he is his money.”

Must we believe that God called some of his children the money of others? Can we believe that God made lashes upon the naked back a legal tender for labour performed? Must we regard the auction block as an altar? Were blood-hounds apostles? Was the slave-pen a temple? Were the stealers and whippers of babes and women the justified children of God?

It is now contended that, while the Old Testament is touched with the barbarism of its times, the New Testament is morally perfect, and that on its pages can be found no blot or stain. As a matter of fact, the New Testament is more decidedly in favour of human slavery than the Old.

For my part, I never will, I never can, worship a God who upholds the institution of slavery. Such a God I hate and defy. I neither want his heaven nor fear his hell.

XXVI.—"INSPIRED" MARRIAGE.

Is there an orthodox clergyman in the world who will now declare that he believes the institution of polygamy to be right? Is there one who will publicly declare that, in his judgment, that institution was ever right? Was there ever a time in the history of the world when it was right to treat women simply as property? Do not attempt to answer these questions by saying that the Bible is an exceedingly good book, that we are indebted for our civilisation to the sacred volume, and that without it man would lapse into savagery and mental night. This is no answer. Was there a time when the institution of polygamy was the highest expression of human virtue? Is there a Christian woman, civilised, intelligent, and free, who believes in the institution of polygamy? Are we better, purer, and more intelligent than God was four thousand years ago? Why should we imprison Mormons and worship God? Polygamy is just as pure in Utah as it could have been in the promised land. Love and virtue are the same the whole world round, and

justice is the same in every star. All the languages of the world are not sufficient to express the filth of polygamy. It makes of man a beast, of woman a trembling slave. It destroys the fireside, makes virtue an outcast, takes from human speech its sweetest words, and leaves the heart a den, where crawl and hiss the slimy serpents of most loathsome lust. Civilisation rests upon the family. The good family is the unit of good government. The virtues grow about the holy hearth of home—they cluster, bloom, and shed their perfume round the fireside where the one man loves the one woman. Lover—husband—wife—mother—father—child—home!—without these sacred words the world is but a lair, and men and women merely beasts.

Why should the innocent maiden and the loving mother worship the heartless Jewish God? Why should they, with pure and stainless lips, read the vile record of inspired lust?

The marriage of the one man to the one woman is the citadel and fortress of civilisation. Without this woman becomes the prey and slave of lust and power, and man goes back to savagery and crime. From the bottom of my heart I hate, abhor, and execrate all theories of life of which the pure and sacred home is not the corner-stone. Take from the world the family, the fireside, the children born of wedded love, and there is nothing left. The home where virtue dwells with love is like a lily with a heart of fire—the fairest flower in all the world.

XXVII.—"INSPIRED" WAR.

If the Bible be true, God commanded his chosen people to destroy men simply for the crime of defending their native land. They were not allowed to spare trembling and white-haired age, nor dimpled babes clasped in the mother's arms. They were ordered to kill women, and to pierce, with the sword of war, the unborn child. "Our heavenly father" commanded the Hebrews to kill the men

and women, the fathers, sons, and brothers, but to preserve the girls alive. Why were not the maidens also killed? Why were they spared? Read the thirty-first chapter of Numbers, and you will find that the maidens were given to the soldiers and the priests. Is there, in all the history of war, a more infamous thing than this? Is it possible that God permitted the violets of modesty, that grow and shed their perfume in the maiden's heart, to be trampled beneath the brutal feet of lust? If this was the order of God, what, under the same circumstances, would have been the command of a Devil? When, in this age of the world, a woman, a wife, a mother, reads this record, she should, with scorn and loathing, throw the book away. A general who now should make such an order, giving over to massacre and rapine a conquered people, would be held in execration by the whole civilised world. Yet, if the Bible be true, the supreme and infinite God was once a savage.

A little while ago, out upon the western plains, in a little path leading to a cabin, were found the bodies of two children and their mother. Her breast was filled with wounds received in the defence of her darlings. They had been murdered by the savages. Suppose, when looking at their lifeless forms, someone had said, "This was done by the command of God!" In Canaan there were countless scenes like this. There was no pity in inspired war. God raised the black flag, and commanded his soldiers to kill even the smiling infant in its mother's arms. Who is the blasphemer—the man who denies the existence of God, or he who covers the robes of the infinite with innocent blood?

We are told in the Pentateuch that God, the father of us all, gave thousands of maidens, after having killed their fathers, their mothers, and their brothers, to satisfy the brutal lusts of savage men. If there be a God, I pray him to write in his book opposite my name that I denied this lie for him.

XXVIII.—"INSPIRED" RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

According to the Bible, God selected the Jewish people through whom to make known the great fact that he was the only true and living God. For this purpose he appeared on several occasions to Moses—came down from Sinai's top clothed in cloud and fire, and wrought a thousand miracles for the preservation and education of the Jewish people. In their presence he opened the waters of the sea. For them he caused bread to rain from heaven. To quench their thirst, water leaped from the dry and barren rock. Their enemies were miraculously destroyed; and for forty years, at least, this God took upon himself the government of the Jews. But, after all this, many of the people had less confidence in him than in gods of wood and stone. In moments of trouble, in periods of disaster, in the darkness of doubt, in the hunger and thirst of famine, instead of asking this God for aid, they turned and sought the help of senseless things. This God, with all his power and wisdom, could not even convince a few wandering and wretched savages that he was more potent than the idols of Egypt. This God was not willing that the Jews should think and investigate for themselves. For heresy the penalty was death. Where this God reigned intellectual liberty was unknown. He appealed only to brute force; he collected taxes by threatening plagues; he demanded worship on pain of sword and fire. He acted as a spy, inquisitor, judge, and executioner.

In Deuteronomy xiii. we have the ideas of God as to mental freedom: "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers—namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the

other end of the earth, thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him. Neither shall thine eye pity him; neither shalt thou spare him; neither shalt thou conceal him. But thou shalt surely kill him. Thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones that he die."

This is the religious liberty of God—the toleration of Jehovah. If I had lived in Palestine at that time, and my wife, the mother of my children, had said to me: "I am tired of Jehovah. He is always asking for blood; he is never weary of killing; he is always telling of his might and strength; always telling what he has done for the Jews; always asking for sacrifices, for doves and lambs—blood, nothing but blood. Let us worship the sun; Jehovah is too revengeful, too malignant, too exacting. Let us worship the sun. The sun has clothed the world in beauty; it has covered the earth with flowers. By its divine light I first saw your face and my beautiful babe"—If I had obeyed the command of God, I should have killed her. My hand would have been first upon her, and after that the hands of all the people; and she would have been stoned with stones until she died. For my part, I would never kill my wife, even if commanded so to do by the real God of this universe. Think of taking up some ragged rock and hurling it against the white bosom filled with love for you; and when you saw oozing from the bruised lips of the death-wound the red current of her sweet life, think of looking up to heaven and receiving the congratulations of the infinite fiend whose commandment you had obeyed.

Can we believe that any such command was ever given by a merciful and intelligent God? Suppose, however, that God did give this law to the Jews, and did tell them that whenever a man preached a heresy, or proposed to worship any other god, they should kill him; and suppose that afterwards this same God took upon himself flesh, and

came to this very chosen people and taught a different religion, and that thereupon the Jews crucified him. I ask you, did he not reap exactly what he had sown? What right would this God have to complain of a crucifixion suffered in accordance with his own command?

Nothing can be more infamous than intellectual tyranny. To put chains upon the body is as nothing compared with putting shackles on the brain. No god is entitled to the worship or the respect of man who does not give, even to the meanest of his children, every right that he claims for himself.

If the Pentateuch be true, religious persecution is a duty. The dungeons of the Inquisition were temples, and the clank of every chain upon the limbs of heresy was music in the ear of God. If the Pentateuch was inspired, every heretic should be destroyed; and every man who advocates a fact inconsistent with the sacred book should be consumed by sword and flame.

In the Old Testament no one is told to reason with a heretic, and not one word is said about relying upon argument, upon education, or upon intellectual development—nothing except simple brute force. Is there to-day a Christian who will say that four thousand years ago it was the duty of a husband to kill his wife if she differed from him upon the subject of religion? Is there one who will now say that, under such circumstances, the wife ought to have been killed? Why should God be so jealous of the wooden idols of the heathen? Could he not compete with Baal? Was he envious of the success of the Egyptian magicians? Was it not possible for him to make such a convincing display of his power as to silence forever the voice of unbelief? Did this God have to resort to force to make converts? Was he so ignorant of the structure of the human mind as to believe all honest doubt a crime? If he wished to do away with the idolatry of the Canaanites, why did he not appear to them? Why did he not give them

the tables of the law? Why did he only make known his will to a few wandering savages in the desert of Sinai? Will some theologian have the kindness to answer these questions? Will some minister who now believes in religious liberty, and eloquently denounces the intolerance of Catholicism, explain these things? Will he tell us why he worships an intolerant God? Is a God who burns a soul forever in another world better than a Christian who burns the body for a few hours in this? Is there no intellectual liberty in heaven? Do the angels all discuss questions on the same side? Are all the investigators in perdition? Will the penitent thief, winged and crowned, laugh at the honest folks in hell? Will the agony of the damned increase or decrease the happiness of God? Will there be in the universe an eternal *auto da-fé*?

XXIX.—CONCLUSION.

If the Pentateuch is not inspired in its astronomy, geology, geography, history, or philosophy, if it is not inspired concerning slavery, polygamy, war, law, religious or political liberty, or the rights of men, women, and children, what is it inspired in or about? The unity of God?—that was believed long before Moses was born. Special providence?—that has been the doctrine of ignorance in all ages. The rights of property?—theft was always a crime. The sacrifice of animals?—that was a custom thousands of years before a Jew existed. The sacredness of life?—there have always been laws against murder. The wickedness of perjury?—truthfulness has always been a virtue. The beauty of chastity?—the Pentateuch does not teach it. Thou shalt worship no other God?—that has been the burden of all religions.

Is it impossible that the Pentateuch could have been written by uninspired men? Was the assistance of God necessary to produce these books? Is it possible that Galileo ascertained the mechanical principles of "Virtual

Velocity," the law of falling bodies and of all motion; that Copernicus ascertained the true position of the earth and accounted for all celestial phenomena; that Kepler discovered his three laws—discoveries of such importance that May 8th, 1618, may be called the birthday of modern science; that Newton gave to the world the Method of Fluxions, the Theory of Universal Gravitation, and the Decomposition of Light; that Euclid, Cavalieri, Descartes, and Leibnitz almost completed the science of mathematics; that all the discoveries in optics, hydrostatics, pneumatics, and chemistry, the experiments, discoveries, and inventions of Galvani, Volta, Franklin, and Morse, of Trevethick, Watt, and Fulton, and all the pioneers of progress—that all this was accomplished by uninspired men, while the writer of the Pentateuch was directed and inspired by an infinite God? Is it possible that the codes of China, India, Egypt, Greece, and Rome were made by man, and that the laws recorded in the Pentateuch were alone given by God? Is it possible that Æschylus and Shakespeare, Burns and Beranger, Goethe and Schiller, and all the poets of the world, and all their wondrous tragedies and songs, are but the work of men, while no intelligence except the infinite God could be the author of the Pentateuch? Is it possible that of all the books that crowd the libraries of the world, the books of science, fiction, history, and song, that all save only one have been produced by man? Is it possible that of all these the Bible only is the work of God?

If the Pentateuch is inspired, the civilisation of our day is a mistake and a crime. There should be no political liberty. Heresy should be trodden out beneath the bigot's brutal feet. Husbands should divorce their wives at will, and make the mothers of their children houseless and weeping wanderers. Polygamy ought to be practised; women should become slaves; we should buy the sons and daughters of the heathen and make

them bondmen and bondwomen for ever. We should sell our own flesh and blood, and have the right to kill our slaves. Men and women should be stoned to death for labouring on the seventh day. "Mediums," such as have familiar spirits, should be burned with fire. Every vestige of mental liberty should be destroyed, and reason's holy torch extinguished in the martyr's blood.

Is it not far better and wiser to say that the Pentateuch, while containing some good laws, some truths, some wise and useful things, is, after all, deformed and blackened by the savagery of its time? Is it not far better and wiser to take the good and throw the bad away?

Let us admit what we know to be true: that Moses was mistaken about a thousand things; that the story of creation is not true; that the garden of Eden is a myth; that the serpent and the tree of knowledge and the fall of man are but fragments of old mythologies lost and dead; that woman was not made out of a rib; that serpents never had the power of speech; that the sons of God did not marry the daughters of men; that the story of the flood and the ark is not exactly true; that the tower of Babel is a mistake; that the confusion of tongues is a childish thing; that the origin of the rainbow is a foolish fancy; that Methuselah did not live nine hundred and sixty-nine years; that Enoch did not leave this world, taking with him his flesh and bones; that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is somewhat improbable; that burning brimstone never fell like rain; that Lot's wife was not changed into chloride of sodium; that Jacob did not, in fact, put his hip out of joint wrestling with God; that the history of Tamar might just as well have been left out; that a belief in Pharaoh's dreams is not essential to salvation; that it makes but little difference whether the rod of Aaron was changed into a serpent or not; that, of all the wonders said to have been performed in Egypt, the greatest is that anybody ever believed the absurd account; that God did not torment the

innocent cattle on account of the sins of their owners; that he did not kill the first-born of the poor maid behind the mill because of Pharaoh's crimes; that flies and frogs were not ministers of God's wrath; that lice and locusts were not the executors of his will; that seventy people did not, in two hundred and fifteen years, increase to three millions; that three priests could not eat six hundred pigeons in a day; that gazing at a brass serpent could not extract poison from the blood; that God did not go into partnership with hornets; that he did not murder people simply because they asked for something to eat; that he did not declare the making of hair-oil and ointment an offence to be punished with death; that he did not miraculously preserve cloth and leather; that he was not afraid of wild beasts; that he did not punish heresy with sword and fire; that he was not jealous, revengeful, and unjust; that he knew all about the sun, moon, and stars; that he did not threaten to kill people for eating the fat of an ox; that he never told Aaron to draw lots to see which of two goats should be killed; that he never objected to clothes made of woollen mixed with linen; that if he objected to dwarfs, people with flat noses, and too many fingers, he ought not to have created such folks; that he did not demand human sacrifice, as set forth in the last chapter of Leviticus; that he did not object to the raising of horses; that he never commanded widows to spit in the faces of their brothers-in-law; that several contradictory accounts of the same transaction cannot all be true; that God did not talk to Abraham as one man talks to another; that angels were not in the habit of walking about the earth eating veal dressed with milk and butter, and making bargains about the destruction of cities; that God never turned himself into a flame of fire and lived in a bush; that he never met Moses in an hotel and tried to kill him; that it was absurd to perform miracles to induce a king to act in a certain way, and then harden his heart so that he would refuse;

that God was not kept from killing the Jews by the fear that the Egyptians would laugh at him; that he did not secretly bury a man, and then allow the corpse to write an account of the funeral; that he never believed the firmament to be solid; that he knew slavery was, and always would be, a frightful crime; that polygamy is but stench and filth; that the brave soldier will always spare an unarmed foe; that only cruel cowards slay the conquered and the helpless; that no language can describe the murderer of a smiling babe; that God did not want the blood of doves and lambs; that he did not love the smell of burning flesh; that he did not want his altars daubed with blood; that he did not pretend that the sins of a people could be transferred to a goat; that he did not believe in witches, wizards, spooks, and devils; that he did not test the virtue of woman with dirty water; that he did not suppose that rabbits chewed the cud; that he never thought there were any four-footed birds; that he did not boast for several hundred years that he had vanquished an Egyptian king; that a dried stick did not bud, blossom, and bear almonds in one night; that manna did not shrink and swell, so that each man could gather only just one omer; that it was never wrong to "countenance the poor man in his cause"; that God never told a people not to live in peace with their neighbours; that he did not spend forty days with Moses on Mount Sinai, giving him patterns for making clothes, tongs, basons, and snuffers; that maternity is not a sin; that physical deformity is not a crime; that an atonement cannot be made for the soul by shedding innocent blood; that killing a dove over running water will not make its blood a medicine; that a god who demands love knows nothing of the human heart; that one who frightens savages with loud noises is unworthy the love of civilised men; that one who destroys children on account of the sins of their fathers is a monster; that an infinite god never threatened to give people the itch; that he never sent wild beasts to devour babes; that he never ordered the violation of maidens; that he never regarded patriotism as a crime; that he never ordered the destruction of unborn children; that he never opened the earth and swallowed wives and babes because husbands had displeased him; that he never demanded that men should kill their sons and brothers for the purpose of sanctifying themselves; that we cannot please God by believing the improbable; that credulity is not a virtue; that investigation is not a crime; that every mind should be free; that all religious persecution is infamous in God as well as man; that without liberty virtue is impossible; that without freedom even love cannot exist; that every man should be allowed to think and to express his thoughts; that woman is the equal of man; that children should be governed by love and reason; that the family relation is sacred; that war is a hideous crime; that all intolerance is born of ignorance and hate; that the freedom of to-day is the hope of to-morrow; that the enlightened present ought not to fall upon its knees and blindly worship the barbaric past; and that every free, brave, and enlightened man should publicly declare that all the ignorant, infamous, heartless, hideous things recorded in the "inspired" Pentateuch are not the words of God, but simply "Some Mistakes of Moses."

SHAKESPEARE

I.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE was the greatest genius of our world. He left to us the richest legacy of all the dead—the treasures of the rarest soul that ever lived and loved and wrought of words the statues, pictures, robes, and gems of thought.

It is hard to overstate the debt we owe to the men and women of genius. Take from our world what they have given, and all the niches would be empty, all the walls naked—meaning and connection would fall from words of poetry and fiction, music would go back to common air, and all the forms of subtle and enchanting Art would lose proportion and become the unmeaning waste and shattered spoil of thoughtless Chance.

Shakespeare is too great a theme. I feel as though endeavouring to grasp a globe so large that the hand obtains no hold. He who would worthily speak of the great dramatist should be inspired by “a muse of fire that should ascend the brightest heaven of invention”—he should have “a kingdom for a stage, and monarchs to behold the swelling scene.”

More than three centuries ago the most intellectual of the human race was born. He was not of supernatural origin. At his birth there were no celestial pyrotechnics. His father and mother were both English, and both had the cheerful habit of living in this world. The cradle in which he was rocked was canopied by neither myth nor miracle, and in his veins there was no drop of royal blood.

This babe became the wonder of mankind. Neither of his parents could read or write. He grew up in a small and ignorant village on the banks of the

Avon, in the midst of the common people of three hundred years ago. There was nothing in the peaceful, quiet landscape on which he looked, nothing in the low hills, the cultivated and undulating fields, and nothing in the murmuring stream, to excite the imagination—nothing, so far as we can see, calculated to sow the seeds of the subtlest and sublimest thought.

So there is nothing connected with his education, or his lack of education, that in any way accounts for what he did. It is supposed that he attended school in his native town; but of this we are not certain. Many have tried to show that he was, after all, of gentle blood; but the fact seems to be the other way. Some of his biographers have sought to do him honour by showing that he was patronised by Queen Elizabeth; but of this there is not the slightest proof.

As a matter of fact, there never sat on any throne a king, queen, or emperor who could have honoured William Shakespeare.

Ignorant people are apt to overrate the value of what is called education. The sons of the poor, having suffered the privations of poverty, think of wealth as the mother of joy. On the other hand, the children of the rich, finding that gold does not produce happiness, are apt to underrate the value of wealth. So the children of the educated often care but little for books, and hold all culture in contempt. The children of great authors do not, as a rule, become writers.

Nature is filled with tendencies and obstructions. Extremes beget limitations, even as a river by its own swiftness creates obstructions for itself.

Possibly, many generations of culture

breed a desire for the rude joys of savagery, and possibly generations of ignorance breed such a longing for knowledge that of this desire, of this hunger of the brain, Genius is born. It may be that the mind, by lying fallow, by remaining idle for generations, gathers strength.

Shakespeare's father seems to have been an ordinary man of his time and class. About the only thing we know of him is that he was officially reported for not coming monthly to church. This is good as far as it goes. We can hardly blame him, because at that time Richard Bifield was the minister at Stratford, and an extreme Puritan, one who read the Psalter by Sternhold and Hopkins.

The church was at one time Catholic, but in John Shakespeare's day it was Puritan; and in 1564, the year of Shakespeare's birth, they had the images defaced. It is greatly to the honour of John Shakespeare that he refused to listen to the "tidings of great joy" as delivered by the Puritan Bifield.

Nothing is known of his mother except her beautiful name—Mary Arden. In those days but little attention was given to the biographies of women. They were born, married, had children, and died. No matter how celebrated their sons became, the mothers were forgotten. In old times, when a man achieved distinction, great pains were taken to find out about the father and grandfather—the idea being that genius is inherited from the father's side. The truth is, that all great men have had great mothers. Great women have had, as a rule, great fathers.

The mother of Shakespeare was, without doubt, one of the greatest of women. She dowered her son with passion and imagination and the higher qualities of the soul, beyond all other men. It has been said that a man of genius should select his ancestors with great care; and yet there does not seem to be as much in heredity as most people think. The children of the great are often small. Pigmies are born in palaces, while over

the children of genius is the roof of straw. Most of the great are like mountains, with the valley of ancestors on one side and the depression of posterity on the other.

In his day Shakespeare was of no particular importance. It may be that his mother had some marvellous and prophetic dreams, but Stratford was unconscious of the immortal child. He was never engaged in a reputable business. Socially he occupied a position below servants. The law described him as "a sturdy vagabond." He was neither a noble, a soldier, nor a priest. Among the half-civilised people of England he who amused and instructed them was regarded as a menial. Kings had their clowns, the people their actors and musicians. Shakespeare was scheduled as a servant. It is thus that successful stupidity has always treated genius. Mozart was patronised by an Archbishop—lived in the palace—but was compelled to eat with the scullions.

The composer of divine melodies was not fit to sit by the side of the theologian, who long ago would have been forgotten but for the fame of the composer.

We know but little of the personal peculiarities, of the daily life, or of what may be called the outward Shakespeare, and it may be fortunate that so little is known. He might have been belittled by friendly fools. What silly stories, what idiotic personal reminiscences, would have been remembered by those who scarcely saw him! We have his best—his sublimest—and we have probably lost only the trivial and the worthless. All that is known can be written on a page.

We are tolerably certain of the date of his birth, of his marriage, and of his death. We think he went to London in 1586, when he was twenty-two years old. We think that three years afterwards he was part owner of Blackfriars' Theatre. We have a few signatures, some of which are supposed to be genuine. We know that he bought some land—that he had two or three law-suits. We know the

names of his children. We also know that this incomparable man—so apart from, and so familiar with, all the world—lived during his literary life in London; that he was an actor, dramatist, and manager; that he returned to Stratford, the place of his birth; that he gave his writings to negligence, deserted the children of his brain; that he died on the anniversary of his birth at the age of fifty-two, and that he was buried in the church where the images had been defaced, and that on his tomb was chiselled a rude, absurd, and ignorant epitaph.

No letter of his to any human being has been found, and no line written by him can be shown.

And here let me give my explanation of the epitaph. Shakespeare was an actor—a disreputable business; but he made money—always reputable. He came back from London a rich man. He bought land, and built houses. Some of the supposed great probably treated him with deference. When he died he was buried in the church. Then came a reaction. The pious thought the church had been profaned. They did not feel that the ashes of an actor were fit to lie in holy ground. The people began to say the body ought to be removed. Then it was, as I believe, that Dr. John Hall, Shakespeare's son-in-law, had this epitaph cut on the tomb:—

“Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
To digg the dust enclosed heare:
Blese be ye man yt spares thes stones,
And curst be he yt moves my bones.”

Certainly Shakespeare could have had no fear that his tomb would be violated. How could it have entered his mind to have put a warning, a threat, and a blessing upon his grave? But the ignorant people of that day were no doubt convinced that the epitaph was the voice of the dead, and, so feeling, they feared to invade the tomb. In this way the dust was left in peace.

This epitaph gave me great trouble for years. It puzzled me to explain why he, who erected the intellectual pyramids—

great ranges of mountains—should put such a pebble at his tomb. But when I stood beside the grave and read the ignorant words, the explanation I have given flashed upon me.

II.

It has been said that Shakespeare was hardly mentioned by his contemporaries, and that he was substantially unknown. This is a mistake. In 1600 a book was published called *England's Parnassus*, and it contained ninety extracts from Shakespeare. In the same year was published the *Garden of the Muses*, containing several pieces from Shakespeare, Chapman, Marston, and Ben Jonson. *England's Helicon* was printed in the same year, and contained poems from Spenser, Greene, Harvey, and Shakespeare.

In 1600 a play was acted at Cambridge, in which Shakespeare was alluded to as follows: “Why, here's our fellow Shakespeare who puts them all down.” John Weaver published a book of poems in 1595, in which there was a sonnet to Shakespeare. In 1598 Richard Bamfield wrote a poem to Shakespeare. Francis Meres, “clergyman, master of arts in both universities, compiler of school books,” was the author of the *Wits' Treasury*. In this he compares the ancient and modern tragic poets, and mentions Marlowe, Peele, Kyd, and Shakespeare. So he compares the writers of comedies, and mentions Lilly, Lodge, Greene, and Shakespeare. He speaks of elegiac poets, and names Surrey, Wyatt, Sidney, Raleigh, and Shakespeare. He compares the lyric poets, and names Spenser, Drayton, Shakespeare, and others. This same writer, speaking of Horace, says that England has Sidney, Shakespeare, and others, and that “as the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet-wittie soul of Ovid lives in the mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare.” He also says: “If the muses could speak English, they would speak in Shakespeare's phrase.” This was in

1598. In 1607 John Davies alludes in a poem to Shakespeare.

Of course we are all familiar with what rare Ben Jonson wrote. Henry Chettle took Shakespeare to task because he wrote nothing on the death of Queen Elizabeth.

It may be wonderful that he was not better known. But is it not wonderful that he gained the reputation that he did in so short a time, and that twelve years after he began to write he stood at least with the first?

III.

But there is a wonderful fact connected with the writings of Shakespeare: In the plays there is no direct mention of any of his contemporaries. We do not know of any poet, author, soldier, sailor, statesman, priest, nobleman, king, or queen, that Shakespeare directly mentioned.

Is it not marvellous that he, living in an age of great deeds, of adventures in far-off lands and unknown seas—in a time of religious wars—in the days of the Armada—the massacre of St. Bartholomew—the Edict of Nantes—the assassination of Henry III.—the victory of Lepanto—the execution of Marie Stuart—did not mention the name of any man or woman of his time? Some have insisted that the paragraph ending with the lines,

“The imperial votress passed on the maiden meditation fancy free,”

referred to Queen Elizabeth; but it is impossible for me to believe that the daubed and wrinkled face, the small black eyes, the cruel nose, the thin lips, the bad teeth, and the red wig of Queen Elizabeth could by any possibility have inspired these marvellous lines.

It is perfectly apparent from Shakespeare's writings that he knew but little of the nobility, little of kings and queens. He gives to these supposed great people great thoughts, and puts great words in their mouths and makes them speak, not as they really did, but as Shakespeare thought such people should.

This demonstrates that he did not know them personally.

Some have insisted that Shakespeare mentions Queen Elizabeth in the last scene of Henry VIII. The answer to this is that Shakespeare did not write the last scene in that play. The probability is that Fletcher was the author.

Shakespeare lived during the great awakening of the world, when Europe emerged from the darkness of the Middle Ages, when the discovery of America had made England, that blossom of the Gulf-Stream, the centre of commerce, and during a period when some of the greatest writers, thinkers, soldiers, and discoverers were produced.

Cervantes was born in 1547, dying on the same day that Shakespeare died. He was undoubtedly the greatest writer that Spain has produced. Rubens was born in 1577. Camoens, the Portuguese, the author of the *Lusiad*, died in 1597. Giordano Bruno—greatest of martyrs—was born in 1548—visited London in Shakespeare's time—delivered lectures at Oxford, and called that institution “the widow of learning.” Drake circled the globe in 1580. Galileo was born in 1564—the same year with Shakespeare. Michael Angelo died in 1563. Kepler—he of the Three Laws—born in 1571. Calderon, the Spanish dramatist, born in 1601. Corneille, the French poet, in 1606. Rembrandt, greatest of painters, 1607. Shakespeare was born in 1564. In that year John Calvin died. What a glorious exchange!

Seventy-two years after the discovery of America Shakespeare was born, and England was filled with the voyages and discoveries written by Hakluyt, and the wonders that had been seen by Raleigh, by Drake, by Frobisher, and Hawkins. London had become the centre of the world, and representatives from all known countries were in the new metropolis. The world had been doubled. The imagination had been touched and kindled by discovery. In the far horizon were unknown lands,

strange shores beyond untraversed seas. Towards every part of the world were turned the prows of adventure. All these things fanned the imagination into flame, and this had its effect upon the literary and dramatic world. And yet Shakespeare—the master spirit of mankind—in the midst of these discoveries, of these adventures, mentioned no navigator, no general, no discoverer, no philosopher.

Galileo was reading the open volume of the sky, but Shakespeare did not mention him. This to me is the most marvellous thing connected with this most marvellous man.

At that time England was prosperous, was then laying the foundation of her future greatness and power.

When men are prosperous, they are in love with life. Nature grows beautiful, the arts begin to flourish, there is work for painter and sculptor, the poet is born, the stage is erected—and this life with which men are in love is represented in a thousand forms.

Nature, or Fate, or Chance, prepared a stage for Shakespeare, and Shakespeare prepared a stage for Nature.

Famine and Faith go together. In disaster and want the gaze of man is fixed upon another world. He that eats a crust has a creed. Hunger falls upon its knees, and heaven, looked for through tears, is the mirage of misery. But prosperity brings joy and wealth and leisure—and the beautiful is born.

One of the effects of the world's awakening was Shakespeare. We account for this man as we do for the highest mountain, the greatest river, the most perfect gem. We can only say: He was.

"It hath been taught us from the primal state
That he which is was wished until he were."

IV.

In Shakespeare's time the actor was a vagabond, the dramatist a disreputable person; and yet the greatest dramas were then written. In spite of law and social ostracism, Shakespeare reared

the many-coloured dome that fills and glorifies the intellectual heavens.

Now the whole civilised world believes in the theatre—asks for some great dramatist—is hungry for a play worthy of the century, is anxious to give gold and fame to any one who can worthily put our age upon the stage; and yet no great play has been written since Shakespeare died.

Shakespeare pursued the highway of the right. He did not seek to put his characters in a position where it was right to do wrong. He was sound and healthy to the centre. It never occurred to him to write a play in which a wife's lover should be jealous of her husband.

There was in his blood the courage of his thought. He was true to himself, and enjoyed the perfect freedom of the highest art. He did not write according to rules, but smaller men make rules from what he wrote.

How fortunate that Shakespeare was not educated at Oxford—that the winged god within him never knelt to the professor. How fortunate that this giant was not captured, tied and tethered by the literary Lilliputians of his time.

He was an idealist. He did not—like most writers of our time—take refuge in the real, hiding a lack of genius behind a pretended love of truth. All realities are not poetic, or dramatic, or even worth knowing. The real sustains the same relation to the ideal that a stone does to a statue, or that paint does to a painting. Realism degrades and impoverishes. In no event can a realist be more than an imitator and copyist. According to the realist's philosophy, the wax that receives and retains an image is an artist.

Shakespeare did not rely on the stage-carpenter or the scenic painter. He put his scenery in his lines. There you will find mountains and rivers and seas, valleys and cliffs, violets and clouds, and over all "the firmament fretted with golden fire." He cared little for plot, little for surprise. He did not rely on stage effects or red fire. The plays grow

before your eyes, and they come as the morning comes. Plot surprises but once. There must be something in a play besides surprise. Plot in an author is a kind of strategy—that is to say, a sort of cunning—and cunning does not belong to the highest natures.

There is in Shakespeare such a wealth of thought that the plot becomes almost immaterial; and such is this wealth that you can hardly know the play—there is too much. After you have heard it again and again, it seems as pathless as an untrodden forest.

He belonged to all lands. "Timon of Athens" is as Greek as any tragedy of Æschylus. "Julius Cæsar" and "Coriolanus" are perfect Roman, and as you read the mighty ruins rise and the Eternal City once again becomes the mistress of the world. No play is more Egyptian than "Antony and Cleopatra"—the Nile runs through it, the shadows of the pyramids fall upon it, and from its scenes the Sphinx gazes forever on the outstretched sands.

In "Lear" is the true pagan spirit. "Romeo and Juliet" is Italian—everything is sudden, love bursts into immediate flower, and in every scene is the climate of the land of poetry and passion.

The reason of this is that Shakespeare dealt with elemental things, with universal man. He knew that locality colours without changing, and that in all surroundings the human heart is substantially the same.

Not all the poetry written before his time would make his sum—not all that has been written since, added to all that was written before, would equal his.

There was nothing within the range of human thought, within the horizon of intellectual effort, that he did not touch. He knew the brain and heart of man—the theories, customs, superstitions, hopes, fears, hatreds, vices, and virtues of the human race.

He knew the thrills and ecstasies of love, the savage joys of hatred and revenge. He heard the hiss of envy's snakes and watched the eagles of ambi-

tion soar. There was no hope that did not put its star above his head—no fear he had not felt—no joy that had not shed its sunshine on his face. He experienced the emotions of mankind. He was the intellectual spendthrift of the world. He gave with the generosity, the extravagance, of madness.

Read one play, and you are impressed with the idea that the wealth of the brain of a god has been exhausted—that there are no more comparisons, no more passions to be expressed, no more definitions, no more philosophy, beauty, or sublimity to be put in words—and yet, the next play opens as fresh as the dewy gates of another day.

The outstretched wings of his imagination filled the sky. He was the intellectual crown of the earth.

V.

The plays of Shakespeare show so much knowledge, thought, and learning that many people—those who imagine that the universities furnish capacity—contend that Bacon must have been the author.

We know Bacon. We know that he was a scheming politician, a courtier, a time-server of Church and king, and a corrupt judge. We know that he never admitted the truth of the Copernican system—that he was doubtful whether instruments were of any advantage in scientific investigation—that he was ignorant of the higher branches of mathematics, and that, as a matter of fact, he added but little to the knowledge of the world. When he was more than sixty years of age, he turned his attention to poetry, and dedicated his verses to George Herbert.

If you will read these verses, you will say that the author of "Lear" and "Hamlet" did not write them.

Bacon dedicated his work on the *Advancement of Learning, Divine and Human*, to James I., and in his dedication he stated that there had not been, since the time of Christ, any king or monarch so learned in all erudition,

divine or human. He placed James the First before Marcus Aurelius and all other kings and emperors since Christ, and concluded by saying that James the First had "the power and fortune of a king, the illumination of a priest, the learning and universality of a philosopher." This was written of James the First, described by Macaulay as a "stammering, slobbering, trembling coward, whose writings were deformed by the grossest and vilest superstitions—witches being the special objects of his fear, his hatred, and his persecution."

It seems to have been taken for granted that, if Shakespeare was not the author of the great dramas, Lord Bacon must have been.

It has been claimed that Bacon was the greatest philosopher of his time. And yet in reading his works we find that there was in his mind a strange mingling of foolishness and philosophy. He takes pains to tell us, and to write it down for the benefit of posterity, that "snow is colder than water, because it hath more spirit in it, and that quicksilver is the coldest of all metals, because it is the fullest of spirit."

He stated that he hardly believed that you could contract air by putting opium on top of the weather glass, and gave the following reason:—

"I conceive that opium and the like-made spirits fly rather by malignity than by cold."

This great philosopher gave the following recipe for staunching blood:—

"Thrust the part that bleedeth into the body of a capon, new ripped and bleeding. This will staunch the blood. The blood, as it seemeth, sucking and drawing up by similitude of substance the blood it meeteth with, and so itself going back."

The philosopher also records this important fact:—

"Divers witches among heathen and Christians have fed upon man's flesh, to aid, as it seemeth, their imagination with high and foul vapours."

Lord Bacon was not only a philo-

sopher, but he was a biologist, as appears from the following:—

"As for living creatures, it is certain that their vital spirits are a substance compounded of an airy and flamy matter, and, although air and flame being free will not mingle, yet, bound in by a body that hath some fixing, will."

Now and then the inventor of deduction reasons by analogy. He says:—

"As snow and ice holpen, and their cold, activated by nitre or salt, will turn water into ice, so it may be it will turn wood or stiff clay into stone."

Bacon seems to have been a believer in the transmutation of metals, and solemnly gives a formula for changing silver or copper into gold. He also believed in the transmutation of plants, and had arrived at such a height in entomology that he informed the world that "insects have no blood."

It is claimed that he was a great observer, and as evidence of this he recorded the wonderful fact that "tobacco cut and dried by the fire loses weight"; that "bears in the winter wax fat in sleep, though they eat not"; that "tortoises have no bones"; that "there is a kind of stone, if ground and put in water where cattle drink, the cows will give more milk"; that "it is hard to cure a hurt in a Frenchman's head, but easy in his leg; that it is hard to cure a hurt in an Englishman's leg, but easy in his head"; that "wounds made with brass weapons are easier to cure than those made with iron"; that "lead will multiply and increase, as in statues buried in the ground"; and that "the rainbow touching anything causeth a sweet smell."

Bacon seems also to have turned his attention to ornithology, and says that "eggs laid in the full of the moon breed better birds," and that "you can make swallows white by putting ointment on the eggs before they are hatched."

He also informs us "that witches cannot hurt kings as easily as they can common people"; that "perfumes dry and strengthen the brain"; that "any

one in the moment of triumph can be injured by another who casts an envious eye, and the injury is greatest when the envious glance comes from the oblique eye."

Lord Bacon also turned his attention to medicine, and he states that "bracelets made of snakes are good for curing cramps"; that "the skin of a wolf might cure colic, because a wolf has great digestion"; that "eating the roasted brains of hens and hares strengthens the memory"; that "if a woman about to become a mother eats a good many quinces and considerable coriander seed, the child will be ingenious," and that "the moss which groweth on the skull of an unburied dead man is good for staunching blood."

He expresses doubt, however, "as to whether you can cure a wound by putting ointment on the weapon that caused the wound, instead of on the wound itself."

It is claimed by the advocates of the Baconian theory that their hero stood at the top of science; and yet "it is absolutely certain that he was ignorant of the law of the acceleration of falling bodies, although the law had been made known and printed by Galileo thirty years before Bacon wrote upon the subject. Neither did this great man understand the principle of the lever. He was not acquainted with the precession of the equinoxes, and as a matter of fact was ill-read in those branches of learning in which, in his time, the most rapid progress had been made."

After Kepler discovered his third law, which was on the 15th of May, 1618, Bacon was more than ever opposed to the Copernican system. This great man was far behind his own time, not only in astronomy, but in mathematics. In the preface to the *Descriptio Globi Intellectualis*, it is admitted either that Bacon had never heard of the correction of the parallax, or was unable to understand it. He complained on account of the want of some method for shortening mathematical calculations; and yet *Napier's*

Logarithms had been printed nine years before the date of his complaint.

He attempted to form a table of specific gravities by a rude process of his own, a process that no one has ever followed; and he did this in spite of the fact that a far better method existed.

We have the right to compare what Bacon wrote with what it is claimed Shakespeare produced. I call attention to one thing—to Bacon's opinion of human love. It is this:—

"The stage is more beholding to love than the life of man. As to the stage, love is ever matter of comedies and now and then of tragedies, but in life it doth much mischief—sometimes like a siren, sometimes like a fury. Among all the great and worthy persons there is not one that hath been transported to the mad degree of love, which shows that great spirits and great business do keep out this weak passion."

The author of "Romeo and Juliet" never wrote that.

It seems certain that the author of the wondrous plays was one of the noblest of men.

Let us see what sense of honour Bacon had.

In writing commentaries on certain passages of Scripture, Lord Bacon tells a courtier, who has committed some offence, how to get back into the graces of his prince or king. Among other things he tells him not to appear too cheerful, but to assume a very grave and modest face; not to bring the matter up himself; to be extremely industrious, so that the prince will see that it is hard to get along without him; also to get his friends to tell the prince or king how badly he, the courtier, feels; and then he says, all these failing, "let him contrive to transfer the fault to others."

It is true that we know but little of Shakespeare, and consequently do not positively know that he did not have the ability to write the plays; but we do know Bacon, and we know that he could not have written these plays—consequently, they must have been written by

a comparatively unknown man—that is to say, by a man who was known by no other writings. The fact that we do not know Shakespeare, except through the plays and sonnets, makes it possible for us to believe that he was the author.

Some people have imagined that the plays were written by several; but this only increases the wonder, and adds a useless burden to credulity.

Bacon published in his time all the writings that he claimed. Naturally, he would have claimed his best. Is it possible that Bacon left the wondrous children of his brain on the door-step of Shakespeare, and kept the deformed ones at home? Is it possible that he fathered the failures and deserted the perfect?

Of course, it is wonderful that so little has been found touching Shakespeare; but is it not equally wonderful, if Bacon was the author, that not a line has been found in all his papers containing a suggestion, or a hint, that he was the writer of these plays? Is it not wonderful that no fragment of any scene—no line—no word—has been found?

Some have insisted that Bacon kept the authorship secret because it was disgraceful to write plays. This argument does not cover the sonnets; and, besides, one who had been stripped of the robes of office for receiving bribes as a judge could have borne the additional disgrace of having written "Hamlet." The fact that Bacon did not claim to be the author demonstrates that he was not. Shakespeare claimed to be the author, and no one in his time or day denied the claim. This demonstrates that he was.

Bacon published his works, and said to the world: This is what I have done.

Suppose you found in a cemetery a monument erected to John Smith, inventor of Smith-churn, and suppose you were told that Mr. Smith provided for the monument in his will, and dictated the inscription—would it be possible to convince you that Mr. Smith

was also the inventor of the locomotive and telegraph?

Bacon's best can be compared with Shakespeare's common, but Shakespeare's best rises above Bacon's best like a domed temple above a beggar's hut.

VI.

Of course it is admitted that there were many dramatists before and during the time of Shakespeare; but they were only the foot-hills of that mighty peak the top of which the clouds and mists still hide. Chapman and Marlowe, Heywood and Jonson, Webster, Beaumont, and Fletcher, wrote some great lines, and in the monotony of declamation now and then is found a strain of genuine music; but all of them together constituted only a herald of Shakespeare. In all these plays there is but a hint, a prophecy, of the great drama destined to revolutionise the poetic thought of the world.

Shakespeare was the greatest of poets. What Greece and Rome produced was great until his time. "Lions make leopards tame."

The great poet is a great artist. He is painter and sculptor. The greatest pictures and statues have been painted and chiselled with words. They outlast all others. All the galleries of the world are poor and cheap compared with the statues and pictures in Shakespeare's book.

Language is made of pictures represented by sounds. The outer world is a dictionary of the mind, and the artist called the soul uses this dictionary of things to express what happens in the noiseless and invisible world of thought. First a sound represents something in the outer world, and afterwards something in the inner; and this sound at last is represented by a mark, and this mark stands for a picture, and every brain is a gallery, and the artists—that is to say, the souls—exchange pictures and statues.

All art is of the same parentage. The poet uses words—makes pictures and

statues of sounds. The sculptor expresses harmony, proportion, passion, in marble; the composer, in music; the painter, in form and colour. The dramatist expresses himself not only in words, not only paints these pictures, but he expresses his thought in action.

Shakespeare was not only a poet, but a dramatist, and expressed the ideal, the poetic, not only in words, but in action. These are the wit, the humour, the pathos, the tragedy of situation, of relation. The dramatist speaks and acts through others—his personality is lost. The poet lives in the world of thought and feeling, and to this the dramatist adds the world of action. He creates characters that seem to act in accordance with their own natures and independently of him. He compresses lives into hours, tells us the secrets of the heart, shows us the springs of action—how desire bribes the judgment and corrupts the will—how weak the reason is when passion pleads, and how grand it is to stand for right against the world.

It is not enough to say fine things; great things, dramatic things, must be done.

Let me give you an illustration of dramatic incident accompanying the highest form of poetic expression.

Macbeth, having returned from the murder of Duncan, says to his wife:—

“Methought I heard a voice cry: Sleep no more, Macbeth does murder sleep: the innocent sleep;

Sleep, that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great Nature's second course,

Chief nourisher in life's feast.”.....

“Still it cried: Sleep no more, to all the house,
Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore
Cawdor
Shall sleep no more—Macbeth shall sleep no more.”

She exclaims:—

“Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy
Thane,
You do unbend your noble strength to think
So brain-sickly of things; go get some water,
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?”

Macbeth was so overcome with horror at his own deed that he not only mistook his thoughts for the words of others, but was so carried away and beyond himself that he brought with him the daggers—the evidence of his guilt—the daggers that he should have left with the dead. This is dramatic.

In the same play the difference of feeling before and after the commission of a crime is illustrated to perfection. When Macbeth is on his way to assassinate the King the bell strikes, and he says, or whispers:—

“Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell.”

Afterwards, when the deed has been committed, and a knocking is heard at the gate, he cries:—

“Wake Duncan with thy knocking. I would thou couldst.”

Let me give one more instance of dramatic action. When Antony speaks above the body of Cæsar he says:—

“You all do know this mantle: I remember
The first time ever Cæsar put it on—
'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,
That day he overcame the Nervii:
Look! In this place ran Cassius' dagger through:

See what a rent the envious Casca made!
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed,
And as he plucked his cursed steel away,
Mark how the blood of Cæsar followed it.”

VII.

There are men, and many of them, who are always trying to show that somebody else chiselled the statue or painted the picture—that the poem is attributed to the wrong man, and that the battle was really won by a subordinate.

Of course, Shakespeare made use of the work of others—and we might almost say, of all others. Every writer must use the work of others. The only question is, how the accomplishments of other minds are used, whether as a foundation to build higher, or whether stolen to the end that the thief may make a reputation for himself, without adding to the great structure of literature.

Thousands of people have stolen stones from the Coliseum to make huts

for themselves. So thousands of writers have taken the thoughts of others with which to adorn themselves. These are plagiarists. But the man who takes the thought of another, adds to it, gives it intensity and poetic form, throb and life, is in the highest sense original.

Shakespeare found nearly all of his facts in the writings of others, and was indebted to others for most of the stories of his plays. The question is not, Who furnished the stone, or who owned the quarry? but, Who chiselled the statue?

We now know all the books that Shakespeare could have read, and consequently know many of the sources of his information. We find in Pliny's *Natural History*, published in 1601, the following: "The sea Pontis evermore floweth and runneth out into the Propontis; but the sea never retireth back again with the Impontis." This was the raw material, and out of it Shakespeare made the following:—

"Like to the Pontic Sea,
Whose icy current and compulsive course
Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
To the Propontic and the Hellespont—
Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent
pace,
Shall ne'er turn back, ne'er ebb or humble
love,
Till that a capable and wide revenge
Swallow them up."

Perhaps we can give an idea of the difference between Shakespeare and other poets by a passage from "Lear."

When Cordelia places her hand upon her father's head and speaks of the night and of the storm, an ordinary poet might have said:—

"On such a night a dog
Should have stood against my fire."

A very great poet might have gone a step further and exclaimed:—

"On such a night mine enemy's dog
Should have stood against my fire."

But Shakespeare said:—

"Mine enemy's dog, though he had bit me,
Should have stood, that night, against my fire."

Of all the poets—of all the writers—Shakespeare is the most original. He is as original as Nature.

It may truthfully be said that "Nature wants stuff to vie strange forms with fancy, to make another."

VIII.

There is in the greatest poetry a kind of extravagance that touches the infinite, and in this Shakespeare exceeds all others.

You will remember the description given of the voyage of Paris in search of Helen:—

"The seas and winds, old wranglers, made a truce,
And did him service; he touched the ports desired,
And for an old aunt, whom the Greeks held captive,
He brought a Grecian queen whose youth and freshness
Wrinkles Apollo, and makes stale the morning."

So, in Pericles, when the father finds his daughter, he cries out:—

"O Helicanus! strike me, honoured sir;
Give me a gash, put me to present pain,
Lest this great sea of joys, rushing upon me,
O'erbear the shores of my mortality."

The greatest compliment that man has ever paid to the woman he adores is this line:—

"Eyes that do mislead the morn."

Nothing can be conceived more perfectly poetic.

In that marvellous play, the "Midsummer Night's Dream," is one of the most extravagant things in literature:—

"Thou rememberest
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the sea-maid's music."

This is so marvellously told that it almost seems probable.

So the description of Mark Antony:—

"For his bounty
There was no winter in't—an autumn 'twas
That grew the more by reaping. His delights
Were dolphin-like—they showed his back above
The element they lived in."

Think of the astronomical scope and amplitude of this:—

"Her bed is India—there she lies a pearl."

Is there anything more intense than these words of Cleopatra?—

“Rather on Nilus mud
Lay me stark naked, and let the water-flies
Blow me into abhorring.”

Or this of Isabella?—

“The impression of keen whips I’d wear as rubies,
And strip myself to death as to a bed
That longing I’ve been sick for, ere I yield
My body up to shame.”

Is there an intellectual man in the world who will not agree with this?—

“Let me not live
After my flame lacks oil, to be the snuff
Of younger spirits.”

Can anything exceed the words of Troilus when parting with Cressida?—

“We two, that with so many thousand sighs
Did buy each other, must poorly sell ourselves
With the rude brevity and discharge of one.
Injurious time now with a robber’s haste
Crams his rich thievery up, he knows not how;
As many farewells as be stars in heaven,
With distinct breath and consigned kisses to them,
He fumbles up into a loose adieu,
And scants us with a single famished kiss,
Distasted with the salt of broken tears.”

Take this example, where pathos almost touches the grotesque:—

“Ah, dear Juliet,
Why art thou yet so fair? Shall I believe
That unsubstantial death is amorous,
And that the lean, abhorred monster keeps
Thee here i’ the dark, to be his paramour?”

Often, when reading the marvellous lines of Shakespeare, I feel that his thoughts are “too subtle potent, turned too sharp in sweetness, for the capacity of my ruder powers.” Sometimes I cry out, “O churl!—write all, and leave no thoughts for those who follow after.”

IX.

Shakespeare was an innovator, an iconoclast. He cared nothing for the authority of men or of schools. He violated the “unities,” and cared nothing for the models of the ancient world.

The Greeks insisted that nothing should be in a play that did not tend to the catastrophe. They did not believe

in the episode—in the sudden contrasts of light and shade—in mingling the comic and the tragic. The sunlight never fell upon their tears, and darkness did not overtake their laughter. They believed that nature sympathised or was in harmony with the events of the play. When crime was about to be committed—some horror to be perpetrated—the light grew dim, the wind sighed, the trees shivered, and upon all was the shadow of the coming event.

Shakespeare knew that the play had little to do with the tides and currents of universal life—that Nature cares neither for smiles nor tears, for life nor death, and that the sun shines as gladly on coffins as on cradles.

The first time I visited the Place de la Concorde, where during the French Revolution stood the guillotine, and where now stands an Egyptian obelisk, a bird, sitting on the top, was singing with all its might.—Nature forgets.

One of the most notable instances of the violation by Shakespeare of the classic model is found in the Sixth Scene of Act I. of “Macbeth.”

When the King and Banquo approach the castle in which the King is to be murdered that night, no shadow falls athwart the threshold. So beautiful is the scene that the King says:—

“This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
Nimble and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.”

And Banquo adds:—

“This guest of summer,
The temple-hunting martlet, does approve
By his loved mansionry that the heaven’s breath
Smells wooingly here; no jutty, frieze, buttress,
Nor coign of vantage, but this bird hath made
His pendent bed and procreant cradle.
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed
The air is delicate.”

Another notable instance is the porter scene immediately following the murder. So, too, the dialogue with the clown, who brings the asp to Cleopatra just before the suicide, illustrates my meaning.

I know of one paragraph in the Greek drama worthy of Shakespeare. This is

in "Medea." When Medea kills her children she curses Jason, using the ordinary Billingsgate and papal curse, but at the conclusion says: "I pray the gods to make him virtuous, that he may the more deeply feel the pang that I inflict."

Shakespeare dealt in lights and shadows. He was intense. He put noons and midnights side by side. No other dramatist would have dreamed of adding to the pathos—of increasing our appreciation of Lear's agony, by supplementing the wail of the mad king with the mocking laughter of a loving clown.

X.

The ordinary dramatists—the men of talent (and there is the same difference between talent and genius as there is between a stonemason and a sculptor)—create characters that become types. Types are of necessity caricatures—actual men and women are to some extent contradictory in their actions. Types are blown in the one direction by the one wind—characters have pilots.

In real people good and evil mingle. Types are all one way, or all the other—all good, or all bad, all wise or all foolish.

Pecksniff was a perfect type, a perfect hypocrite, and will remain a type as long as language lives—a hypocrite that even drunkenness could not change. Everybody understands Pecksniff, and compared with him Tartuffe was an honest man.

Hamlet is an individual, a person, an actual being; and for that reason there is a difference of opinion as to his motives and as to his character. We differ about Hamlet as we do about Cæsar, or about Shakespeare himself.

Hamlet saw the ghost of his father and heard again his father's voice, and yet, afterwards, he speaks of "the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns."

In this there is no contradiction. The reason outweighs the senses. If we should see a dead man rise from his grave, we would not, the next day,

believe that we did. No one can credit a miracle until it becomes so common that it ceases to be miraculous.

Types are puppets—controlled from without; characters act from within. There is the same difference between characters and types as there is between springs and water-works, between canals and rivers, between wooden soldiers and heroes.

In most plays and in most novels the characters are so shadowy that we have to piece them out with the imagination.

One waking in the morning sometimes sees at the foot of his bed a strange figure—it may be of an ancient lady with cap and ruffles, and with the expression of garrulous and fussy old age; but when the light gets stronger the figure gradually changes, and he sees a few clothes on a chair.

The dramatist lives the lives of others, and in order to delineate character must not only have imagination, but sympathy with the character delineated. The great dramatist thinks of a character as an entirety, as an individual.

I once had a dream, and in this dream I was discussing a subject with another man. It occurred to me that I was dreaming, and I then said to myself: If this is a dream, I am doing the talking for both sides—consequently, I ought to know in advance what the other man is going to say. In my dream I tried the experiment. I then asked the other man a question, and before he answered made up my mind what the answer was to be. To my surprise, the man did not say what I expected he would, and so great was my astonishment that I awoke.

It then occurred to me that I had discovered the secret of Shakespeare. He did, when awake, what I did when asleep—that is, he threw off a character so perfect that it acted independently of him.

In the delineation of character Shakespeare has no rivals. He creates no monsters. His characters do not act without reason, without motive.

Iago had his reasons. In Caliban nature was not destroyed; and Lady Macbeth certifies that the woman still was in her heart, by saying:—

“Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done it.”

Shakespeare's characters act from within. They are centres of energy. They are not pushed by unseen hands, or pulled by unseen strings. They have objects, desires. They are persons—real, living beings.

Few dramatists succeed in getting their characters loose from the canvas—their backs stick to the wall—they do not have free and independent action—they have no background, no unexpressed motives—no untold desires. They lack the complexity of the real.

Shakespeare makes the character true to itself. Christopher Sly, surrounded by the luxuries of a lord, true to his station, calls for a pot of the smallest ale.

Take one expression by Lady Macbeth. You remember that after the murder is discovered—after the alarm bell is rung—she appears upon the scene wanting to know what has happened. Macduff refuses to tell her, saying that the slightest word would murder as it fell. At this moment Banquo comes upon the scene, and Macduff cries out to him:—

“Our royal master's murdered.”

What does Lady Macbeth then say? She, in fact, makes a confession of guilt. The weak point in the terrible tragedy is that Duncan was murdered in Macbeth's castle. So, when Lady Macbeth hears what they suppose is news to her, she cries:—

“What! In our house!”

Had she been innocent, her horror of the crime would have made her forget the place—the venue; Banquo sees through this, and sees through her. Her expression was a light by which he saw her guilt; and he answers:—

“Too cruel anywhere.”

No matter whether Shakespeare delineated clown or king, warrior or maiden—no matter whether his characters are

taken from the gutter or the throne—each is a work of consummate art, and when he is unnatural he is so splendid that the defect is forgotten.

When Romeo is told of the death of Juliet, and thereupon makes up his mind to die upon her grave, he gives a description of the shop where poison could be purchased. He goes into particulars and tells of the alligators stuffed, of the skins of ill-shaped fishes, of the beggarly account of empty boxes, of the remnants of pack-thread, and old cakes of roses; and while it is hardly possible to believe that under such circumstances a man would take the trouble to make an inventory of a strange kind of drug-store, yet the inventory is so perfect—the picture is so marvellously drawn—that we forget to think whether it is natural or not.

In making the frame of a great picture—of a great scene—Shakespeare was often careless; but the picture is perfect. In making the sides of the arch he was negligent, but when he placed the keystone it burst into blossom. Of course, there are many lines in Shakespeare that never should have been written. In other words, there are imperfections in his plays. But we must remember that Shakespeare furnished the torch that enables us to see these imperfections.

Shakespeare speaks through his characters, and we must not mistake what the characters say for the opinion of Shakespeare. No one can believe that Shakespeare regarded life as “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” That was the opinion of a murderer, surrounded by avengers, and whose wife—partner in his crimes, troubled with thick-coming fancies—had gone down to her death.

Most actors and writers seem to suppose that the lines called “The Seven Ages” contain Shakespeare's view of human life. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The lines were uttered by a cynic, in contempt and scorn of the human race.

Shakespeare did not put his characters

in the livery and uniform of some weakness, peculiarity, or passion. He did not use names as tags or brands. He did not write under the picture, "This is a villain." His characters need no suggestive names to tell us what they are—we see them and we know them for ourselves.

It may be that in the greatest utterances of the greatest characters in the supreme moments we have the real thoughts, opinions, and convictions of Shakespeare.

Of all writers Shakespeare is the most impersonal. He speaks through others, and the others seem to speak for themselves. The didactic is lost in the dramatic. He does not use the stage as a pulpit to enforce some maxim. He is as reticent as Nature.

He idealises the common and transfigures all he touches; but he does not preach. He was interested in men and things as they were. He did not seek to change them, but to portray. He was Nature's mirror, and in that mirror Nature saw herself.

When I stood amid the great trees of California that lift their spreading capitals against the clouds, looking like Nature's columns to support the sky, I thought of the poetry of Shakespeare.

XI.

What a procession of men and women—statesmen and warriors—kings and clowns—issued from Shakespeare's brain! What women!

Isabella—in whose spotless life love and reason blended into perfect truth.

Juliet—within whose heart passion and purity met like white and red within the bosom of a rose.

Cordelia—who chose to suffer loss rather than show her wealth of love with those who gilded lies in hope of gain.

Hermione—"tender as infancy and grace"; who bore with perfect hope and faith the cross of shame, and who at last forgave with all her heart.

Desdemona—so innocent, so perfect, her love so pure, that she was incapable of suspecting that another could suspect,

and who with dying words sought to hide her lover's crime; and with her last faint breath uttered a loving lie that burst into a perfumed lily between her pallid lips.

Perdita—a violet dim, and sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes; "the sweetest low-born lass that ever ran on the green sward." And

Helcne, who said:—

"I know I love in vain, strive against hope;
Yet in this captious and intenable sieve
I still pour in the waters of my love,
And lack not to lose still; thus, Indian-like,
Religious in mine error, I adore
The sun that looks upon his worshipper,
But knows of him no more."

Miranda—who told her love as gladly as a flower gives its bosom to the kisses of the sun.

And Cordelia, whose kisses cured, and whose tears restored. And stainless Imogen, who cried: "What is it to be false?"

And here is the description of the perfect woman:—

"To feed for aye her lamp and flames of love;
To keep her constancy in plight and youth—
Outliving beauty's outward with a mind
That doth renew swifter than blood decays."

Shakespeare has done more for woman than all the other dramatists of the world.

For my part I love the clowns. I love Launce and his dog Crabb, and Gobbo, whose conscience threw its arms around the neck of his heart; and Touchstone, with his lie seven times removed; and dear old Dogberry—a pretty piece of flesh, tedious as a king. And Bottom, the very paramour for a sweet voice, longing to take the part to tear a cat in; and Autolycus, the snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, sleeping out the thought for the life to come. And great Sir John, without conscience, and for that reason unblamed and enjoyed; and who at the end babbles of green fields, and is almost loved. And ancient Pistol, the world his oyster. And Bardolph, with the flea on his blazing nose, putting beholders in mind

of a damned soul in hell. And the poor Fool, who followed the mad king, and went "to bed at noon." And the clown who carried the worm of Nilus, whose "biting was immortal." And Corin, the shepherd, who described the perfect man: "I am a true labourer: I earn that I eat—get that I wear—owe no man aught—envy no man's happiness—glad of other men's good—content."

And mingling in this motley throng Lear, within whose brain a tempest raged until the depths were stirred, and the intellectual wealth of a life was given back to memory—and then by madness thrown to storm and night—and when I read the living lines I feel as though I looked upon the sea and saw it wrought by frenzied whirlwinds, until the buried treasures and the sunken wrecks of all the years were cast upon the shores.

And Othello—who, like the base Indian, threw a pearl away richer than all his tribe.

And Hamlet—thought-entangled, hesitating between two worlds.

And Macbeth—strange mingling of cruelty and conscience, reaping the sure harvest of successful crime; "Curses not loud but deep—mouth-honour—breath."

And Brutus, falling on his sword that Cæsar might be still.

And Romeo, dreaming of the white wonder of Juliet's hand. And Ferdinand, the patient log-man for Miranda's sake. And Florizel, who, "for all the sun sees, or the close earth wombs, or the profound seas hide," would not be faithless to the low-born lass. And Constance, weeping for her son, while grief "stuffs out his vacant garments with his form."

And in the midst of tragedies and tears, of love and laughter and crime, we hear the voice of the good friar, who declares that in every human heart, as in the smallest flower, there are encamped the opposed hosts of good and evil; and our philosophy is interrupted by the garrulous old nurse, whose talk is as busily useless as the babble of a stream that hurries by a ruined mill.

From every side the characters crowd upon us—the men and women born of Shakespeare's brain. They utter with a thousand voices the thoughts of the "myriad-minded" man, and impress themselves upon us as deeply and vividly as though they really lived with us.

Shakespeare alone has delineated love in every possible phase—has ascended to the very top, and actually reached heights that no other has imagined. I do not believe the human mind will ever produce, or be in a position to appreciate, a greater love-play than "Romeo and Juliet." It is a symphony in which all music seems to blend. The heart bursts into blossom, and he who reads feels the swooning intoxication of a divine perfume.

In the alembic of Shakespeare's brain the baser metals were turned to gold; passions became virtues, weeds became exotics from some diviner land, and common mortals made of ordinary clay out-ranked the Olympian gods. In his brain there was a touch of chaos that suggests the infinite—that belongs to genius. Talent is measured and mathematical—dominated by prudence and the thought of use. Genius is tropical. The creative instinct runs riot, delights in extravagance and waste, and overwhelms the mental beggars of the world with uncounted gold and unnumbered gems.

Some things are immortal: The plays of Shakespeare, the marbles of the Greeks, and the music of Wagner.

XII.

Shakespeare was the greatest of philosophers. He knew the conditions of success—of happiness—the relations that men sustain to each other, and the duties of all. He knew the tides and currents of the heart—the cliffs and caverns of the brain. He knew the weakness of the will, the sophistry of desire, and

"That pleasure and revenge have ears more deaf than adders to the voice of any true decision."

He knew that the soul lives in an invisible world—that flesh is but a mask, and that

“There is no art to find the mind’s construction
In the face.”

He knew that courage should be the servant of judgment, and that

“When valour preys on reason it eats the sword
It fights with.”

He knew that man is never master of the event, that he is to some extent the sport or prey of the blind forces of the world, and that

“In the reproof of chance lies the true proof of men.”

Feeling that the past is unchangeable, and that that which must happen is as much beyond control as though it had happened, he says:—

“Let determined things to destiny
Hold unbewailed their way.”

Shakespeare was great enough to know that every human being prefers happiness to misery, and that crimes are but mistakes. Looking in pity upon the human race, upon the pain of poverty, the crimes and cruelties, the limping travellers on the thorny paths, he was great and good enough to say:—

“There is no darkness but ignorance.”

In all the philosophies there is no greater line. This great truth fills the heart with pity.

He knew that place and power do not give happiness—that the crowned are subject as the lowest to fate and chance.

“For within the hollow crown,
That rounds the mortal temples of a king,
Keeps death his court; and there the antick
sits,
Scoffing his state, and grinning at his pomp;
Allowing him a breath, a little scene
To monarchise, be fear’d, and kill with
looks;
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
As if this flesh, which walls about our life,
Were brass impregnable; and, humour’d
thus,
Comes at the last, and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and—farewell
king!”

So, too, he knew that gold could not

bring joy—that death and misfortune come alike to rich and poor, because:—

“If thou art rich thou art poor;
For like an ass whose back with ingots bows
Thou bearest thy heavy riches but a journey,
And death unloads thee.”

In some of his philosophy there was a kind of scorn—a hidden meaning that could not in his day and time have safely been expressed. You will remember that Laertes was about to kill the king, and this king was the murderer of his own brother, and sat upon the throne by reason of his crime; and in the mouth of such a king Shakespeare puts these words:—

“There’s such divinity doth hedge a king.”

So, in Macbeth:—

“How he solicits Heaven
Himself best knows; but strangely visited people
All swollen and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
The mere despairs of surgery, he cures;
Hanging a golden stamp about their necks.
Put on with holy prayers; and ’tis spoken
To the succeeding royalty—he leaves
The healing benediction. With this strange
virtue
He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,
And sundry blessings hang about his throne,
That speak him full of grace.”

Shakespeare was the master of the human heart—knew all the hopes, fears, ambitions, and passions that sway the mind of man; and, thus knowing, he declared that

“Love is not love
That alters when it alteration finds.”

This is the sublimest declaration in the literature of the world.

Shakespeare seems to give the generalisation—the result—without the process of thought. He seems always to be at the conclusion—standing where all truths meet.

In one of the sonnets is this fragment of a line that contains the highest possible truth:—

“Conscience is born of love.”

If man were incapable of suffering, the words “right” and “wrong” never could have been spoken. If man were destitute of imagination, the flower of pity never could have blossomed in his heart.

We suffer—we cause others to suffer—those that we love ; and of this fact conscience is born.

Love is the many-coloured flame that makes the fireside of the heart. It is the mingled spring and autumn—the perfect climate of the soul.

XIII.

In the realm of comparison Shakespeare seems to have exhausted the relations, parallels, and similitudes of things. He only could have said :—

“ Tedious as a twice-told tale
Vexing the ears of a drowsy man.”

“ Duller than a great thaw.
Dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage.”

In the words of Ulysses, spoken to Achilles, we find the most wonderful collection of pictures and comparisons ever compressed within the same number of lines :—

“ Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion—
A great-sized monster of ingratitude—
Those scraps are good deeds passed ; which
are devoured
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon
As done ; perseverance, dear my lord,
Keeps honour bright : to have done is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mockery. Take the instant
way ;
For honour travels in a strait so narrow
Where one but goes abreast ; keep then the
path ;
For emulation hath a thousand sons
That one by one pursue ; if you give way,
Or hedge aside from the direct forthright,
Like to an entered tide, they all rush by
And leave you hindmost :
Or, like a gallant horse fallen in first rank,
Lie there for pavement to the abject rear,
O’errun and trampled on : then what they do
in present,
Tho’ less than yours in past, must o’ertop
yours ;
For time is like a fashionable host
That slightly shakes his parting guest by the
hand,
And, with his arms outstretched as he would
fly,
Grasps in the comer : Welcome ever smiles.
And Farewell goes out sighing.”

So the words of Cleopatra when Charmain speaks :—

“ Peace, peace :

Dost thou not see my baby at my breast
That sucks the nurse asleep ?”

XIV.

Nothing is more difficult than a definition—a crystallisation of thought so perfect that it emits light. Shakespeare says of suicide :—

“ It is great to do that thing
That ends all other deeds,
Which shackles accident, and bolts up
change.”

He defines drama to be :—

“ Turning the accomplishments of many years
Into an hour glass.”

Of death :—

“ To lie in cold obstruction and to rot.
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod.”

Of memory :—

“ The warder of the brain.”

Of the body :—

“ This muddy vesture of decay.”

And he declares that

“ Our little life is rounded with a sleep.”

He speaks of Echo as

“ The babbling gossip of the air.”

Romeo, addressing the poison that he is about to take, says :—

“ Come, bitter conduct, come unsavoury guide,
Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on
The dashing rocks thy sea-sick, weary bark.”

He describes the world as

“ This bank and shoal of time.”

He says of rumour :—

“ That it doubles, like the voice of echo.”

It would take days to call attention to the perfect definitions, comparisons, and generalisations of Shakespeare. He gave us the deeper meanings of our words—taught us the art of speech. He was the lord of language—master of expression and compression.

He put the greatest thoughts into the shortest words ; made the poor rich and the common royal.

Production enriched his brain. Nothing exhausted him. The moment his attention was called to any subject—comparisons, definitions, metaphors, and

generalisations filled his mind and begged for utterance. His thoughts, like bees, robbed every blossom in the world, and then with "merry march" brought the rich booty home "to the tent royal of their emperor."

Shakespeare was the confidant of Nature. To him she opened her "infinite book of secrecy," and in his brain were "the hatch and brood of time."

XV.

There is in Shakespeare the mingling of laughter and tears, humour and pathos. Humour is the rose, wit the thorn. Wit is a crystallisation, humour an efflorescence. Wit is the lightning of the soul.

In Shakespeare's nature was the climate of humour. He saw and felt the sunny side even of the saddest things. You have seen sunshine and rain at once.

So Shakespeare's tears fell oft upon his smiles. In moment of peril—on the very darkness of death—there comes a touch of humour that falls like a fleck of sunshine.

Gonzalo, when the ship is about to sink, having seen the boatswain, exclaims :—

"I have great comfort from this fellow ; methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him ; his complexion is perfect gallows."

Shakespeare is filled with the strange contrasts of grief and laughter. While poor Hero is supposed to be dead—wrapped in the shroud of dishonour—Dogberry and Verges unconsciously put again the wedding wreath upon her pure brow.

The soliloquy of Launcelot—great as Hamlet's—offsets the bitter and burning words of Shylock.

There is only time to speak of Maria in "Twelfth Night," of Autolycus in the "Winter's Tale," of the parallel drawn by Fluellen between Alexander of Macedon and Harry of Monmouth, or of the marvellous humour of Falstaff, who never had the faintest thought of right or wrong, or of Mercutio, that

embodiment of wit and humour, or of the grave-diggers who lamented that "great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves more than their even Christian," and who reached the generalisation that "the gallows does well because it does well to those who do ill."

There is also an example of grim humour—an example without a parallel in literature, so far as I know. Hamlet having killed Polonius is asked :—

"Where's Polonius?"

"At supper."

"At supper ! where?"

"Not where he eats, but where he is eaten."

Above all others, Shakespeare appreciated the pathos of situation.

Nothing is more pathetic than the last scene in "Lear." No one has ever bent above his dead who did not feel the words uttered by the mad king—words born of a despair deeper than tears :—

"Oh, that a horse, a dog, a rat hath life,
And thou no breath !"

So Iago, after he has been wounded, says :—

"I bleed, sir ; but not killed."

And Othello answers from the wreck and shattered remnant of his life :—

"I would have thee live ;

For, in my sense, 'tis happiness to die."

When Troilus finds Cressida has been false he cries :—

"Let it not be believed for womanhood ;
Think ! we had mothers."

Ophelia, in her madness, "the sweet bells jangled out o' tune," says softly :—

"I would give you some violets ;

But they withered all when my father died."

When Macbeth has reaped the harvest, the seeds of which were sown by his murderous hand, he exclaims—and what could be more pitiful?—

"I 'gin to be aweary of the sun."

Richard the Second feels how small a thing it is to be, or to have been, a king, or to receive honours before or after power is lost ; and so, of those who stood uncovered before him, he asks this piteous question :—

"I live with bread, like you ; feel want,
Taste grief, need friends ; subjected thus,
How can you say to me I am a king?"

Think of the salutation of Antony to the dead Cæsar :—

"Pardon me, thou piece of bleeding earth."

When Pisanio informs Imogen that he had been ordered by Posthumus to murder her, she bares her neck and cries :—

"The lamb entreats the butcher : Where is thy knife?"

Thou art too slow to do thy master's bidding
When I desire it too."

Antony, as the last drops are falling from his self-inflicted wound, utters with his dying breath to Cleopatra, this :—

"I here importune death awhile, until
Of many thousand kisses the poor last
I lay upon thy lips."

To me, the last words of Hamlet are full of pathos :—

"I die, Horatio.

The potent poison quite o'er crows my spirit....
The rest is silence."

XVI.

Some have insisted that Shakespeare must have been a physician, for the reason that he shows such knowledge of medicine, of the symptoms of disease and death, was so familiar with the brain, and with insanity in all its forms.

I do not think he was a physician. He knew too much—his generalisations were too splendid. He had none of the prejudices of that profession in his time. We might as well say that he was a musician, a composer, because we find in "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" nearly every musical term known in Shakespeare's time.

Others maintain that he was a lawyer, perfectly acquainted with the forms, with the expressions, familiar to that profession ; yet there is nothing to show that he was a lawyer, or that he knew more about law than any intelligent man should know.

He was not a lawyer. His sense of justice was never dulled by reading English law.

Some think that he was a botanist, because he named nearly all known

plants. Others, that he was an astronomer, a naturalist, because he gave hints and suggestions of nearly all discoveries.

Some have thought that he must have been a sailor, for the reason that the orders given in the opening of "The Tempest" were the best that could, under the circumstances, have been given to save the ship.

For my part, I think there is nothing in the plays to show that he was a lawyer, doctor, botanist, or scientist. He had the observant eyes that really see, the ears that really hear, the brain that retains all pictures, all thoughts, logic as unerring as light, the imagination that supplies defects and builds the perfect from a fragment. And these faculties, these aptitudes, working together, account for what he did.

He exceeded all the sons of men in the splendour of his imagination. To him the whole world paid tribute, and Nature poured her treasures at his feet. In him all races lived again, and even those to be were pictured in his brain.

He was a man of imagination—that is to say, of genius—and, having seen a leaf and a drop of water, he could construct the forests, the rivers, and the seas ; and in his presence all the cataracts would fall and foam, the mists rise, the clouds form and float.

If Shakespeare knew one fact, he knew its kindred and its neighbours. Looking at a coat of mail, he instantly imagined the society, the conditions, that produced it and what it, in turn, produced. He saw the castle, the moat, the draw-bridge, the lady in the tower, and the knightly lover spurring across the plain. He saw the bold baron and the rude retainer, the trampled serf, and all the glory and the grief of feudal life.

He lived the life of all.

He was a citizen of Athens in the days of Pericles. He listened to the eager eloquence of the great orators, and sat upon the cliffs, and with the tragic poet heard "the multitudinous laughter of the sea." He saw Socrates thrust the spear of question through the shield and

heart of falsehood. He was present when the great man drank hemlock, and met the night of death tranquil as a star meets morning. He listened to the peripatetic philosophers, and was unpuzzled by the sophists. He watched Phidias as he chiselled shapeless stone to forms of love and awe.

He lived by the mysterious Nile, amid the vast and monstrous. He knew the very thought that wrought the form and features of the Sphinx. He heard great Memnon's morning song when marble lips were smitten by the sun. He laid him down with the embalmed and waiting dead, and felt within their dust the expectation of another life, mingled with cold and suffocating doubts—the children born of long delay.

He walked the ways of mighty Rome, and saw great Cæsar with his legions in the field. He stood with vast and motley throngs, and watched the triumphs given to victorious men, followed by uncrowned kings, the captured hosts, and all the spoils of ruthless war. He heard the shout that shook the Coliseum's roofless walls when from the reeling gladiator's hand the short sword fell, while from his bosom gushed the stream of wasted life.

He lived the life of savage men. He trod the forest's silent depths, and in the desperate game of life or death he matched his thought against the instinct of the beast.

He knew all crimes and all regrets, all virtues and their rich rewards. He was victim and victor, pursuer and pursued, outcast and king. He heard the applause and curses of the world, and on his heart had fallen all the nights and noons of failure and success.

He knew the unspoken thoughts, the dumb desires, the wants and ways of beasts. He felt the crouching tiger's thrill, the terror of the ambushed prey, and with the eagles he had shared the ecstasy of flight and poise and swoop, and he had lain with sluggish serpents on the barren rocks uncoiling slowly in the heat of noon.

He sat beneath the bo-tree's contemplative shade, wrapped in Buddha's mighty thought, and dreamed all dreams that light, the alchemist, has wrought from dust and dew, and stored within the slumbrous poppy's subtle blood.

He knelt with awe and dread at every shrine, he offered every sacrifice and every prayer, felt the consolation and the shuddering fear, mocked and worshipped all the gods, enjoyed all heavens, and felt the pangs of every hell.

He lived all lives, and through his blood and brain there crept the shadow and the chill of every death, and his soul, like Mazeppa, was lashed naked to the wild horse of every fear and love and hate.

The imagination had a stage in Shakespeare's brain, whereon were set all scenes that lie between the morn of laughter and the night of tears, and where his players bodied forth the false and true, the joys and griefs, the careless shallows and the tragic deeps of universal life.

From Shakespeare's brain there poured a Niagara of gems spanned by Fancy's seven-hued arch. He was as many-sided as clouds are many-formed. To him giving was hoarding, sowing was harvest, and waste itself the source of wealth. Within his marvellous mind were the fruits of all thought past, the seeds of all to be. As a drop of dew contains the image of the earth and sky, so all there is of life was mirrored forth in Shakespeare's brain.

Shakespeare was an intellectual ocean, whose waves touched all the shores of thought; within which were all the tides and waves of destiny and will; over which swept all the storms of fate, ambition, and revenge; upon which fell the gloom and darkness of despair and death and all the sunlight of content and love, and within which was the inverted sky lit with the eternal stars—an intellectual ocean—towards which all rivers ran, and from which now the isles and continents of thought receive their dew and rain.

WHY AM I AN AGNOSTIC?

THE same rules or laws of probability must govern in religious questions as in others. There is no subject—and can be none—concerning which any human being is under any obligation to believe without evidence. Neither is there any intelligent being who can, by any possibility, be flattered by the exercise of ignorant credulity. The man who, without prejudice, reads and understands the Old and New Testaments will cease to be an orthodox Christian. The intelligent man who investigates the religion of any country without fear and without prejudice will not and cannot be a believer.

Most people, after arriving at the conclusion that Jehovah is not God, that the Bible is not an inspired book, and that the Christian religion, like other religions, is the creation of man, usually say: "There must be a Supreme Being, but Jehovah is not his name, and the Bible is not his word. There must be somewhere an over-ruling Providence or Power."

This position is just as untenable as the other. He who cannot harmonise the cruelties of the Bible with the goodness of Jehovah cannot harmonise the cruelties of Nature with the goodness and wisdom of a supposed Deity. He will find it impossible to account for pestilence and famine, for earthquake and storm, for slavery, for the triumph of the strong over the weak, for the countless victories of injustice. He will find it impossible to account for martyrs—for the burning of the good, the noble, the loving, by the ignorant, the malicious, and the infamous.

How can the Deist satisfactorily account for the sufferings of women and children? In what way will he justify

religious persecution—the flame and sword of religious hatred? Why did his God sit idly on his throne and allow his enemies to wet their swords in the blood of his friends? Why did he not answer the prayers of the imprisoned, of the helpless? And when he heard the lash upon the naked back of the slave, why did he not also hear the prayer of the slave? And when children were sold from the breasts of mothers, why was he deaf to the mother's cry?

It seems to me that the man who knows the limitations of the mind, who gives the proper value to human testimony, is necessarily an Agnostic. He gives up the hope of ascertaining first or final causes, of comprehending the supernatural, or of conceiving of an infinite personality. From out the words "Creator," "Preserver," and "Providence" all meaning falls.

The mind of man pursues the path of least resistance, and the conclusions arrived at by the individual depend upon the nature and structure of his mind, on his experience, on hereditary drifts and tendencies, and on the countless things that constitute the difference in minds. One man, finding himself in the midst of mysterious phenomena, comes to the conclusion that all is the result of design; that back of all things is an infinite personality—that is to say, an infinite man; and he accounts for all that is by simply saying that the universe was created and set in motion by this infinite personality, and that it is miraculously and supernaturally governed and preserved. This man sees with perfect clearness that matter could not create itself, and therefore he imagines a creator of matter. He is perfectly satisfied that there is design in the world, and that,

consequently, there must have been a designer. It does not occur to him that it is necessary to account for the existence of an infinite personality. He is perfectly certain that there can be no design without a designer, and he is equally certain that there can be a designer who was not designed. The absurdity becomes so great that it takes the place of a demonstration. He takes it for granted that matter was created, and that its creator was not. He assumes that a creator existed from eternity, without cause, and created what is called "matter" out of nothing; or, whereas there was nothing, this creator made the something that we call substance.

Is it possible for the human mind to conceive of an infinite personality? Can it imagine a beginning-less being, infinitely powerful and intelligent? If such a being existed, then there must have been an eternity during which nothing did exist except this being; because, if the universe was created, there must have been a time when it was not, and back of that there must have been an eternity during which nothing but an infinite personality existed. Is it possible to imagine an infinite intelligence dwelling for an eternity in infinite nothing? How could such a being be intelligent? What was there to be intelligent about? There was but one thing to know—namely, that there was nothing except this being. How could such a being be powerful? There was nothing to exercise force upon. There was nothing in the universe to suggest an idea. Relations could not exist—except the relation between infinite intelligence and infinite nothing.

The next great difficulty is the act of creation. My mind is so that I cannot conceive of something being created out of nothing. Neither can I conceive of anything being created without a cause. Let me go one step further. It is just as difficult to imagine something being created with, as without, a cause. To postulate a cause does not in the least lessen the difficulty. In spite of all,

this lever remains without a fulcrum. We cannot conceive of the destruction of substance. The stone can be crushed to powder, and the powder can be ground to such a fineness that the atoms can only be distinguished by the most powerful microscope, and we can then imagine these atoms being divided and subdivided again and again and again; but it is impossible for us to conceive of the annihilation of the least possible imaginable fragment of the least atom of which we can think. Consequently, the mind can imagine neither creation nor destruction. From this point it is very easy to reach the generalisation that the indestructible could not have been created.

These questions, however, will be answered by each individual according to the structure of his mind, according to his experience, according to his habits of thought, and according to his intelligence or his ignorance, his prejudice or his genius.

Probably a very large majority of mankind believe in the existence of supernatural beings, and a majority of what are known as civilised nations in an infinite personality. In the realm of thought majorities do not determine. Each brain is a kingdom, each mind is a sovereign.

The universality of a belief does not even tend to prove its truth. A large majority of mankind have believed in what is known as God, and an equally large majority have as implicitly believed in what is known as the Devil. These beings have been inferred from phenomena. They were produced for the most part by ignorance, by fear, and by selfishness. Man in all ages has endeavoured to account for the mysteries of life and death, of substance, of force, for the ebb and flow of things, for earth and star. The savage, dwelling in his cave, subsisting on roots and reptiles, or on beasts that could be slain with club and stone, surrounded by countless objects of terror, standing by rivers, so far as he knew, without source or end, by seas with but one shore, the prey of

beasts mightier than himself, of diseases strange and fierce, trembling at the voice of thunder, blinded by the lightning, feeling the earth shake beneath him, seeing the sky lurid with the volcano's glare—fell prostrate and begged for the protection of the Unknown.

In the long night of savagery, in the midst of pestilence and famine, through the long and dreary winters, crouched in dens of darkness, the seeds of superstition were sown in the brain of man. The savage believed, and thoroughly believed, that everything happened in reference to him; that he by his actions could excite the anger, or by his worship placate the wrath, of the Unseen. He resorted to flattery and prayer. To the best of his ability, he put in stone, or rudely carved in wood, his idea of this God. For this idol he built a hut, a hovel, and at last a cathedral. Before these images he bowed, and at these shrines, whereon he lavished his wealth, he sought protection for himself and for the ones he loved. The few took advantage of the ignorant many. They pretended to have received messages from the Unknown. They stood between the helpless multitude and the gods. They were the carriers of flags of truce. At the court of heaven they presented the cause of man, and upon the labour of the deceived they lived.

The Christian of to-day wonders at the savage who bowed before his idol; and yet it must be confessed that the god of stone answered prayer and protected his worshippers precisely as the Christian's God answers prayer and protects his worshippers to-day.

My mind is so that it is forced to the conclusion that substance is eternal; that the universe was without beginning and will be without end; that it is the one eternal existence; that relations are transient and evanescent; that organisms are produced and vanish; that forms change—but that the substance of things is from eternity to eternity. It may be that planets are born and die, that constellations will fade from the infinite

spaces, that countless suns will be quenched—but the substance will remain.

The questions of origin and destiny seem to be beyond the powers of the human mind.

Heredity is on the side of superstition. All our ignorance pleads for the old. In most men there is a feeling that their ancestors were exceedingly good and brave and wise, and that in all things pertaining to religion their conclusions should be followed. They believe that their fathers and mothers were of the best, and that that which satisfied them should satisfy their children. With a feeling of reverence they say that the religion of their mother is good enough and pure enough and reasonable enough for them. In this way the love of parents and the reverence for ancestors have unconsciously bribed the reason and put out, or rendered exceedingly dim, the eyes of the mind.

There is a kind of longing in the heart of the old to live and die where their parents lived and died—a tendency to go back to the homes of their youth. Around the old oak of manhood grow and cling these vines. Yet it will hardly do to say that the religion of my mother is good enough for me, any more than to say the geology, or the astronomy, or the philosophy of my mother is good enough for me. Every human being is entitled to the best he can obtain; and if there has been the slightest improvement on the religion of the mother, the son is entitled to that improvement, and he should not deprive himself of that advantage by the mistaken idea that he owes it to his mother to perpetuate, in a reverential way, her ignorant mistakes.

If we are to follow the religion of our fathers and mothers, our fathers and mothers should have followed the religion of theirs. Had this been done, there could have been no improvement in the world of thought. The first religion would have been the last, and the child would have died as ignorant as

the mother. Progress would have been impossible, and on the graves of ancestors would have been sacrificed the intelligence of mankind.

We know, too, that there has been the religion of the tribe, of the community, and of the nation, and that there has been a feeling that it was the duty of every member of the tribe or community, and of every citizen of the nation, to insist upon it that the religion of that tribe, of that community, of that nation, was better than that of any other. We know that all the prejudices against other religions, and all the egotism of nation and tribe, were in favour of the local superstition. Each citizen was patriotic enough to denounce the religions of other nations and to stand firmly by his own. And there is this peculiarity about man: he can see the absurdities of other religions while blinded to those of his own. The Christian can see clearly enough that Mohammed was an impostor. He is sure of it, because the people of Mecca who were acquainted with him declared that he was no prophet; and this declaration is received by Christians as a demonstration that Mohammed was not inspired. Yet these same Christians admit that the people of Jerusalem who were acquainted with Christ rejected him; and this rejection they take as proof positive that Christ was the Son of God.

The average man adopts the religion of his country, or, rather, the religion of his country adopts him. He is dominated by the egotism of race, the arrogance of nation, and the prejudice called patriotism. He does not reason—he feels. He does not investigate—he believes. To him the religions of other nations are absurd and infamous, and their gods monsters of ignorance and cruelty. In every country this average man is taught, first, that there is a supreme being; second, that he has made known his will; third, that he will reward the true believer; fourth, that he will punish the unbeliever, the scoffer, and the blasphemer; fifth, that certain

ceremonies are pleasing to his god; sixth, that he has established a Church; and seventh, that priests are his representatives on earth. And the average man has no difficulty in determining that the god of his nation is the true God; that the will of this true God is contained in the sacred scriptures of his nation; that he is one of the true believers, and that the people of other nations—that is, believing other religions—are scoffers; that the only true Church is the one to which he belongs; and that the priests of his country are the only ones who have had or ever will have the slightest influence with this true God. All these absurdities to the average man seem self-evident propositions; and so he holds all the other creeds in scorn, and congratulates himself that he is a favourite of the one true God.

If the average Christian had been born in Turkey, he would have been a Mohammedan; and if the average Mohammedan had been born in New England and educated at Andover, he would have regarded the damnation of the heathen as the “tidings of great joy.”

Nations have eccentricities, peculiarities, and hallucinations, and these find expression in their laws, customs, ceremonies, morals, and religions. And these are in great part determined by soil, climate, and the countless circumstances that mould and dominate the lives and habits of insects, individuals, and nations. The average man believes implicitly in the religion of his country, because he knows nothing of any other, and has no desire to know. It fits him because he has been deformed to fit it, and he regards this fact of fit as an evidence of its inspired truth.

Has a man the right to examine, to investigate, the religion of his own country—the religion of his father and mother? Christians admit that the citizens of all countries not Christian have not only this right, but that it is their solemn duty. Thousands of missionaries are sent to heathen countries to persuade the believers in other

religions, not only to examine their superstitions, but to renounce them, and to adopt those of the missionaries. It is the duty of a heathen to disregard the religion of his country and to hold in contempt the creed of his father and of his mother. If the citizens of heathen nations have the right to examine the foundations of their religion, it would seem that the citizens of Christian nations have the same right. Christians, however, go further than this; they say to the heathen: You must examine your religion, and not only so, but you must reject it; and, unless you do reject it, and, in addition to such rejection, adopt ours, you will be eternally damned. Then these same Christians say to the inhabitants of a Christian country: You must not examine; you must not investigate; but, whether you examine or not, you must believe, or you will be eternally damned.

If there be one true religion, how is it possible to ascertain which of all the religions the true one is? There is but one way. We must impartially examine the claims of all. The right to examine involves the necessity to accept or reject. Understand me, not the right to accept or reject, but the necessity. From this conclusion there is no possible escape. If, then, we have the right to examine, we have the right to tell the conclusion reached. Christians have examined other religions somewhat, and they have expressed their opinion with the utmost freedom—that is to say, they have denounced them all as false and fraudulent, have called their gods idols and myths, and their priests impostors.

The Christian does not deem it worth while to read the Koran. Probably not one Christian in a thousand ever saw a copy of that book. And yet all Christians are perfectly satisfied that the Koran is the work of an impostor. No Presbyterian thinks it is worth his while to examine the religious systems of India; he knows that the Brahmins are mistaken, and that all their miracles are falsehoods. No Methodist cares to read the life of

Buddha, and no Baptist will waste his time studying the ethics of Confucius. Christians of every sort and kind take it for granted that there is only one true religion, and that all religions except Christianity are absolutely without foundation. The Christian world believes that all the prayers of India are unanswered; that all the sacrifices upon the countless altars of Egypt, of Greece, and of Rome were without effect. They believe that all these mighty nations worshipped their gods in vain; that their priests were deceivers or deceived; that their ceremonies were wicked or meaningless; that their temples were built by ignorance and fraud, and that no god heard their songs of praise, their cries of despair, their words of thankfulness; that on account of their religion no pestilence was stayed; that the earthquake and volcano, the flood and storm, went on their ways of death, while the real God looked on and laughed at their calamities and mocked at their fears.

We find now that the prosperity of nations has depended, not upon their religion, not upon the goodness or providence of some god, but on soil and climate and commerce, upon the ingenuity, industry, and courage of the people, upon the development of the mind, on the spread of education, on the liberty of thought and action; and that in this mighty panorama of national life reason has built and superstition has destroyed.

Being satisfied that all believe precisely as they must, and that religions have been naturally produced, I have neither praise nor blame for any man. Good men have had bad creeds, and bad men have had good ones. Some of the noblest of the human race have fought and died for the wrong. The brain of man has been the trysting-place of contradictions. Passion often masters reason, and "the state of man, like to a little kingdom, suffers then the nature of an insurrection."

In the discussion of theological or religious questions we have almost

passed the personal phase, and we are now weighing arguments instead of exchanging epithets and curses. They who really seek for truth must be the best of friends. Each knows that his desire can never take the place of fact, and that, next to finding truth, the greatest honour must be won in honest search.

We see that many ships are driven in many ways by the same wind. So men, reading the same book, write many creeds and lay out many roads to heaven. To the best of my ability, I have examined the religions of many countries and the creeds of many sects. They are much alike, and the testimony by which they are substantiated is of such a character that to those who believe is promised an eternal reward. In all the sacred books there are some truths, some rays of light, some words of love and hope. The face of savagery is sometimes softened by a smile—the human triumphs and the heart breaks into song. But in these books are also found the words of fear and hate, and from their pages crawl serpents that coil and hiss in all the paths of men.

For my part, I prefer the books that inspiration has not claimed. Such is the nature of my brain that Shakespeare gives me greater joy than all the prophets of the ancient world. There are thoughts that satisfy the hunger of the mind. I am convinced that Humboldt knew more of geology than the author of *Genesis*; that Darwin was a greater naturalist than he who told the story of the Flood; that Laplace was better acquainted with the habits of the sun and moon than Joshua could have been; and that Haeckel, Huxley, and Tyndall know more about the earth and stars, about the history of man, the philosophy of life—more that is of use, ten thousand times—than all the writers of the sacred books.

I believe in the religion of reason—the gospel of this world; in the development of the mind, in the accumulation of intellectual wealth, to the end that man may free himself from superstitious

fear, to the end that he may take advantage of the forces of nature to feed and clothe the world.

Let us be honest with ourselves. In the presence of countless mysteries; standing beneath the boundless heaven sown thick with constellations; knowing that each grain of sand, each leaf, each blade of grass, asks of every mind the answerless question; knowing that the simplest thing defies solution; feeling that we deal with the superficial and the relative, and that we are for ever eluded by the real, the absolute—let us admit the limitations of our minds, and let us have the courage and the candour to say: We do not know.

The Christian religion rests on miracles. There are no miracles in the realm of science. The real philosopher does not seek to excite wonder, but to make that plain which was wonderful. He does not endeavour to astonish, but to enlighten. He is perfectly confident that there are no miracles in nature. He knows that the mathematical expression of the same relations, contents, areas, numbers, and proportions must forever remain the same. He knows that there are no miracles in chemistry; that the attractions and repulsions, the loves and hatreds, of atoms are constant. Under like conditions, he is certain that like will always happen; that the product ever has been and forever will be the same; that the atoms or particles unite in definite, unvarying proportions—so many of one kind mix, mingle, and harmonise with just so many of another, and the surplus will be forever cast out. There are no exceptions. Substances are always true to their natures. They have no caprices, no prejudices, that can vary or control their action. They are “the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.”

In this fixedness, this constancy, this eternal integrity, the intelligent man has absolute confidence. It is useless to tell him that there was a time when fire would not consume the combustible, when water would not flow in obedience to the attraction of gravitation, or that

there ever was a fragment of a moment during which substance had no weight.

Credulity should be the servant of intelligence. The ignorant have not credulity enough to believe the actual, because the actual appears to be contrary to the evidence of their senses. To them it is plain that the sun rises and sets, and they have not credulity enough to believe in the rotary motion of the earth—that is to say, they have not intelligence enough to comprehend the absurdities involved in their belief, and the perfect harmony between the rotation of the earth and all known facts. They trust their eyes, not their reason. Ignorance has always been and always will be at the mercy of appearance. Credulity, as a rule, believes everything except the truth. The semi-civilised believe in astrology, but who could convince them of the vastness of astronomical spaces, the speed of light, or the magnitude and number of suns and constellations? If Hermann the magician and Humboldt the philosopher could have appeared before savages, which would have been regarded as a god?

When men knew nothing of mechanics, nothing of the correlation of force, and of its indestructibility, they were believers in perpetual motion. So when chemistry was a kind of sleight-of-hand, or necromancy, something accomplished by the aid of the supernatural, people talked about the transmutation of metals, the universal solvent, and the philosopher's stone. Perpetual motion would be a mechanical miracle, and the transmutation of metals would be a miracle in chemistry; and if we could make the result of multiplying two by two five, that would be a miracle in mathematics. No one expects to find a circle the diameter of which is just one-fourth of the circumference. If one could find such a circle, then there would be a miracle in geometry.

In other words, there are no miracles in any science. The moment we understand a question or subject, the miraculous necessarily disappears. If anything actually happens in the chemical world,

it will under like conditions happen again. No one need take an account of this result from the mouths of others: all can try the experiment for themselves. There is no caprice, and no accident.

It is admitted, at least by the Protestant world, that the age of miracles has passed away, and, consequently, miracles cannot at present be established by miracles; they must be substantiated by the testimony of witnesses who are said by certain writers—or, rather, by uncertain writers—to have lived several centuries ago; and this testimony is given to us, not by the witnesses themselves, not by persons who say that they talked with those witnesses, but by unknown persons who did not give the sources of their information.

The question is: Can miracles be established except by miracles? We know that the writers may have been mistaken. It is possible that they may have manufactured these accounts themselves. The witnesses may have told what they knew to be untrue, or they may have been honestly deceived, or the stories may have been true as first told. Imagination may have added greatly to them, so that after several centuries of accretion a very simple truth was changed to a miracle.

We must admit that all probabilities must be against miracles, for the reason that that which is probable cannot by any possibility be a miracle. Neither the probable nor the possible, so far as man is concerned, can be miraculous. The probability, therefore, says that the writers and witnesses were either mistaken or dishonest.

We must admit that we have never seen a miracle ourselves, and we must admit that, according to our experience, there are no miracles. If we have mingled with the world, we are compelled to say that we have known a vast number of persons—including ourselves—to be mistaken, and many others who have failed to tell the exact truth. The probabilities are on the side of our experience, and, consequently, against the

miraculous ; and it is a necessity that the free mind moves along the path of least resistance.

The effect of testimony depends on the intelligence and honesty of the witness and the intelligence of him who weighs. A man living in a community where the supernatural is expected, where the miraculous is supposed to be of almost daily occurrence, will, as a rule, believe that all wonderful things are the result of supernatural agencies. He will expect providential interference, and, as a consequence, his mind will pursue the path of least resistance, and will account for all phenomena by what to him is the easiest method. Such people, with the best intentions, honestly bear false witness. They have been imposed upon by appearances, and are victims of delusion and illusion.

In an age when reading and writing were substantially unknown, and when history itself was but the vaguest hearsay handed down from dotage to infancy, nothing was rescued from oblivion except the wonderful, the miraculous. The more marvellous the story, the greater the interest excited. Narrators and hearers were alike ignorant and alike honest. At that time nothing was known, nothing suspected, of the orderly course of nature—of the unbroken and unbreakable chain of causes and effects. The world was governed by caprice. Everything was at the mercy of a being, or beings, who were themselves controlled by the same passions that dominated man. Fragments of facts were taken for the whole, and the deductions drawn were honest and monstrous.

It is probably certain that all the religions of the world have been believed, and that all the miracles have found credence in countless brains ; otherwise they could not have been perpetuated. They were not all born of cunning. Those who told were as honest as those who heard. This being so, nothing has been too absurd for human credence.

All religions, so far as I know, claim to have been miraculously founded,

miraculously preserved, and miraculously propagated. The priests of all claimed to have messages from God, and claimed to have a certain authority, and the miraculous has always been appealed to for the purpose of substantiating the message and the authority.

If men believe in the supernatural, they will account for all phenomena by an appeal to supernatural means or power. We know that formerly everything was accounted for in this way except some few simple things with which man thought he was perfectly acquainted. After a time men found that under like conditions like would happen, and as to those things the supposition of supernatural interference was abandoned ; but that interference was still active as to all the unknown world. In other words, as the circle of man's knowledge grew, supernatural interference withdrew, and was active only just beyond the horizon of the known.

Now, there are some believers in universal special providence—that is, men who believe in perpetual interference by a supernatural power, this interference being for the purpose of punishing or rewarding, of destroying or preserving, individuals and nations.

Others have abandoned the idea of providence in ordinary matters, but still believe that God interferes on great occasions and at critical moments, especially in the affairs of nations, and that his presence is manifest in great disasters. This is the compromise position. These people believe that an infinite being made the universe and impressed upon it what they are pleased to call "laws," and then left it to run in accordance with those laws and forces ; that as a rule it works well, and that the divine Maker interferes only in cases of accident, or at moments when the machine fails to accomplish the original design.

There are others who take the ground that all is natural ; that there never has been, never will be, never can be, any interference from without, for the reason

that Nature embraces all, and that there can be no without or beyond.

The first class are Theists pure and simple; the second are Theists as to the unknown, Naturalists as to the known; and the third are Naturalists without a touch or taint of superstition.

What can the evidence of the first class be worth? This question is answered by reading the history of those nations that believed thoroughly and implicitly in the supernatural. There is no conceivable absurdity that was not established by their testimony. Every law or every fact in nature was violated. Children were born without parents; men lived for thousands of years; others subsisted without food, without sleep; thousands and thousands were possessed with evil spirits, controlled by ghosts and ghouls; thousands confessed themselves guilty of impossible offences, and in courts, with the most solemn forms, impossibilities were substantiated by the oaths, affirmations, and confessions of men, women, and children.

These delusions were not confined to ascetics and peasants, but they took possession of nobles and kings; of people who were at that time called intelligent; of the then educated. No one denied these wonders, for the reason that denial was a crime punishable generally with death. Societies, nations, became insane—victims of ignorance, of dreams, and, above all, of fears. Under these conditions human testimony is not, and cannot be, of the slightest value. We now know that nearly all of the history of the world is false, and we know this because we have arrived at that phase or point of intellectual development where and when we know that effects must have causes, that everything is naturally produced, and that, consequently, no nation could ever have been great, powerful, and rich, unless it had the soil, the people, the intelligence, and the commerce. Weighed in these scales, nearly all histories are found to be fictions.

The same is true of religions. Every intelligent American is satisfied that the

religions of India, of Egypt, of Greece and Rome, of the Aztecs, were and are false, and that all the miracles on which they rest are mistakes. Our religion alone is excepted. Every intelligent Hindoo discards all religions and all miracles except his own. The question is: When will people see the defects in their own theology as clearly as they perceive the same defects in every other?

All the so-called false religions were substantiated by miracles, by signs and wonders, by prophets and martyrs, precisely as our own. Our witnesses are no better than theirs, and our success is no greater. If their miracles were false, ours cannot be true. Nature was the same in India as in Palestine.

One of the cornerstones of Christianity is the miracle of inspiration, and this same miracle lies at the foundation of all religions. How can the fact of inspiration be established? How could even the inspired man know that he was inspired? If he was influenced to write and did write, and did express thoughts and facts that to him were absolutely new, on subjects about which he had previously known nothing, how could he know that he had been influenced by an infinite being? And if he could know, how could he convince others?

What is meant by inspiration? Did the one inspired set down only the thoughts of a supernatural being? Was he simply an instrument, or did his personality colour the message received and given? Did he mix his ignorance with the divine information, his prejudices and hatreds with the love and justice of the Deity? If God told him not to eat the flesh of any beast that dieth of itself, did the same Infinite Being also tell him to sell this meat to the stranger within his gates?

A man says that he is inspired—that God appeared to him in a dream, and told him certain things. Now, the things said to have been communicated may have been good and wise; but will the fact that the communication is good or wise establish the inspiration? If, on

the other hand, the communication is absurd or wicked, will that conclusively show that the man was not inspired? Must we judge from the communication? In other words, is our reason to be the final standard?

How could the inspired man know that the communication was received from God? If God in reality should appear to a human being, how could this human being know who had appeared? By what standard would he judge? Upon this question man has no experience; he is not familiar enough with the supernatural to know gods even if they exist. Although thousands have pretended to receive messages, there has been no message in which there was, or is, anything above the invention of man. There are just as wonderful things in the uninspired as in the inspired books, and the prophecies of the heathen have been fulfilled equally with those of the Judæan prophets. If, then, even the inspired man cannot certainly know that he is inspired, how is it possible for him to demonstrate his inspiration to others? The last solution of this question is that inspiration is a miracle about which only the inspired can have the least knowledge or the least evidence, and this knowledge and this evidence not of a character to absolutely convince even the inspired.

There is certainly nothing in the Old or the New Testament that could not have been written by uninspired human beings. To me there is nothing of any particular value in the Pentateuch. I do not know of a solitary scientific truth contained in the five books commonly attributed to Moses. There is not, as far as I know, a line in the book of Genesis calculated to make a human being better. The laws contained in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are for the most part puerile and cruel. Surely there is nothing in any of these books that could not have been produced by uninspired men. Certainly there is nothing calculated to excite intellectual admiration in the

book of Judges or in the wars of Joshua; and the same may be said of Samuel, Chronicles, and Kings. The history is extremely childish, full of repetitions, of useless details, without the slightest philosophy, without a generalisation born of a wide survey. Nothing is known of other nations; nothing imparted of the slightest value; nothing about education, discovery, or invention. And these idle and stupid annals are interspersed with myth and miracle, with flattery for kings who supported priests, and with curses and denunciations for those who would not hearken to the voice of the prophets. If all the historic books of the Bible were blotted from the memory of mankind, nothing of value would be lost.

Is it possible that the writer or writers of First and Second Kings were inspired, and that Gibbon wrote *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* without supernatural assistance? Is it possible that the author of Judges was simply the instrument of an infinite God, while John W. Draper wrote *The Intellectual Development of Europe* without one ray of light from the other world? Can we believe that the author of Genesis had to be inspired, while Darwin experimented, ascertained, and reached conclusions for himself?

Ought not the work of a God to be vastly superior to that of a man? And if the writers of the Bible were in reality inspired, ought not that book to be the greatest of books? For instance, if it were contended that certain statues had been chiselled by inspired men, such statues should be superior to any that uninspired man has made. As long as it is admitted that the Venus de Milo is the work of man, no one will believe in inspired sculptors—at least, until a superior statue has been found. So in the world of painting. We admit that Corot was uninspired. Nobody claims that Angelo had supernatural assistance. Now, if someone should claim that a certain painter was simply the instrumentality of God, certainly the pictures produced

by that painter should be superior to all others.

I do not see how it is possible for an intelligent human being to conclude that the Song of Solomon is the work of God, and that the tragedy of *Lear* was the work of an uninspired man. We are all liable to be mistaken, but the *Iliad* seems to me a greater work than the book of Esther, and I prefer it to the writings of Haggai and Hosea. *Æschylus* is superior to Jeremiah, and Shakespeare rises immeasurably above all the sacred books of the world.

It does not seem possible that any human being ever tried to establish a truth—anything that really happened—by what is called a miracle. It is easy to understand how that which was common became wonderful by accretion—by things added, and by things forgotten—and it is easy to conceive how that which was wonderful became by accretion what was called supernatural. But it does not seem possible that any intelligent, honest man ever endeavoured to prove anything by a miracle.

As a matter of fact, miracles could only satisfy people who demanded no evidence; else how could they have believed the miracle? It also appears to be certain that, even if miracles had been performed, it would be impossible to establish that fact by human testimony. In other words, miracles can only be established by miracles, and in no event could miracles be evidence except to those who were actually present; and in order for miracles to be of any value, they would have to be perpetual. It must also be remembered that a miracle actually performed could by no possibility shed any light on any moral truth, or add to any human obligation.

If any man has ever been inspired,

this is a secret miracle, known to no person, and suspected only by the man claiming to be inspired. It would not be in the power of the inspired to give satisfactory evidence of that fact to anybody else.

The testimony of man is insufficient to establish the supernatural. Neither the evidence of one man nor of twelve men can stand when contradicted by the experience of the intelligent world. If a book sought to be proved by miracles is true, then it makes no difference whether it was inspired or not; and if it is not true, inspiration cannot add to its value.

The truth is that the Church has always—unconsciously, perhaps—offered rewards for falsehood. It was founded upon the supernatural, the miraculous, and it welcomed all statements calculated to support the foundation. It rewarded the traveller who found evidences of the miraculous, who had seen the pillar of salt into which the wife of Lot had been changed, and the tracks of Pharaoh's chariots on the sands of the Red Sea. It heaped honours on the historian who filled his pages with the absurd and the impossible. It had geologists and astronomers of its own, who constructed the earth and the constellations in accordance with the Bible. With sword and flame it destroyed the brave and thoughtful men who told the truth. It was the enemy of investigation and of reason. Faith and Fiction were in partnership.

To-day the intelligence of the world denies the miraculous. Ignorance is the soil of the supernatural. The foundation of Christianity has crumbled, has disappeared, and the entire fabric must fall. The natural is true. The miraculous is false.

ORTHODOXY

It is utterly inconceivable that any man believing in the truth of the Christian religion should publicly deny it, because he who believes in that religion would believe that, by a public denial, he would peril the eternal salvation of his soul. It is conceivable, and without any great effort of the mind, that millions who do not believe in the Christian religion should openly say that they did. In a country where religion is supposed to be in power—where it has rewards for pretence, where it puts a premium upon hypocrisy, where it at least is willing to purchase silence—it is easily conceivable that millions pretend to believe what they do not.

ORTHODOX RELIGION DYING OUT.

It gives me immense pleasure to say here and now that orthodox religion is dying out of the civilised world. It is a sick man. It has been attacked with two diseases—softening of the brain and ossification of the heart. It is a religion that no longer satisfies the intelligence of this country; that no longer satisfies the brain; a religion against which the heart of every civilised man and woman protests. It is a religion that gives hope only to a few; that puts a shadow upon the cradle; that wraps the coffin in darkness, and fills the future of mankind with flame and fear. It is a religion that I am going to do what little I can while I live to destroy. In its place I want humanity, I want good fellowship, I want intellectual liberty—free speech, the discoveries and inventions of genius, the demonstrations of science—the religion of art, music, and poetry—of good houses, good clothes, good wages—that is to say, the religion of this world.

RELIGIOUS DEATHS AND BIRTHS.

We must remember that this is a world of progress, a world of perpetual change—a succession of coffins and cradles. There is perpetual death, and there is perpetual birth. By the grave of the old forever stand youth and joy; and, when an old religion dies, a better one is born. When we find out that an assertion is a falsehood, a shining truth takes its place, and we need not fear the destruction of the false. The more false we destroy, the more room there will be for the true.

There was a time when the astrologer sought to read in the stars the fate of men and nations. The astrologer has faded from the world, but the astronomer has taken his place. There was a time when the poor alchemist, bent and wrinkled and old, over his crucible endeavoured to find some secret by which he could change the baser metals into purest gold. The alchemist has gone; the chemist took his place; and, although he finds nothing to change metals into gold, he finds something that covers the earth with wealth. There was a time when the soothsayer and augur flourished. After them came the parson and priest; and the parson and the priest must go. The preacher must go, and in his place must come the teacher—the real interpreter of Nature. We are done with the supernatural. We are through with the miraculous and the impossible. There was once the prophet who pretended to read the book of the future. His place has been taken by the philosopher, who reasons from effect to cause—who finds the facts by which we are surrounded, and endeavours to reason from these premises, and to tell what in all

probability will happen. The prophet has gone, the philosopher is here. There was a time when man sought aid from heaven—when he prayed to the deaf sky. There was a time when everything depended on the supernaturalist. That time in Christendom is passing away. We now depend upon the naturalist—not upon the believer in ancient falsehoods, but on the discoverer of facts—on the demonstrator of truths. At last we are beginning to build on a solid foundation, and, as we progress, the supernatural dies. The leaders of the intellectual world deny the existence of the supernatural. They take from all superstition its foundation.

THE RELIGION OF RECIPROCITY.

Supernatural religion will fade from this world, and in its place we shall have reason. In the place of the worship of something we know not of will be the religion of mutual love and assistance—the great religion of reciprocity. Superstition must go. Science will remain. The Church dies hard. The brain of the world is not yet developed. There are intellectual diseases as well as physical—there are pestilences and plagues of the mind.

Whenever the new comes the old protests, and fights for its place as long as it has a particle of power. We are now having the same warfare between superstition and science that there was between the stage coach and the locomotive. But the stage coach had to go. It had its day of glory and power, but it is gone. It went West. In a little while it will be driven into the Pacific. So we find that there is the same conflict between the different sects and different schools not only of philosophy, but of medicine.

Recollect that everything except the demonstrated truth is liable to die. That is the order of Nature. Words die. Every language has a cemetery. Every now and then a word dies and a tombstone is erected, and across it is written "obsolete." New words are continually being born. There is a cradle in which

a word is rocked. A thought is married to a sound, and a child-word is born. And there comes a time when the word gets old, and wrinkled, and expressionless, and is carried mournfully to the grave. So in the schools of medicine. You can remember, so can I, when the old allopathists, the bleeders and blisterers, reigned supreme. If there was anything the matter with a man, they let out his blood. Called to the bedside, they took him on the point of a lancet to the edge of eternity, and then practised all their art to bring him back. One can hardly imagine how perfect a constitution it took a few years ago to stand the assault of a doctor. And long after the old practice was found to be a mistake hundreds and thousands of the ancient physicians clung to it, carried around with them, in one pocket a bottle of jalap, and in the other a rusty lancet, sorry that they could not find some patient with faith enough to allow the experiment to be made again.

So these schools, and these theories, and these religions die hard. What else can they do? Like the paintings of the old masters, they are kept alive because so much money has been invested in them. Think of the amount of money that has been invested in superstition! Think of the schools that have been founded for the more general diffusion of useless knowledge! Think of the colleges wherein men are taught that it is dangerous to think, and that they must never use their brains except in the act of faith! Think of the millions and billions of dollars that have been expended in churches, in temples, and in cathedrals! Think of the thousands and thousands of men who depend for their living upon the ignorance of mankind! Think of those who grow rich on credulity and who fatten on faith! Do you suppose they are going to die without a struggle? What are they to do? From the bottom of my heart I sympathise with the poor clergyman that has had all his common sense educated out of him, and is now to be thrown upon the cold

and unbelieving world. His prayers are not answered; he gets no help from on high, and the pews are beginning to criticise the pulpit. What is the man to do? If he suddenly changes, he is gone. If he preaches what he really believes, he will get notice to quit. And yet, if he and the congregation would come together and be perfectly honest, they would all admit that they believe little and know nothing.

Only a little while ago a couple of ladies were riding together from a revival, late at night, and one said to the other, as they rode along: "I am going to say something that will shock you, and I beg of you never to tell it to anybody else. I am going to tell it to you." "Well, what is it?" said she. "I do not believe the Bible." The other replied: "Neither do I."

I have often thought how splendid it would be if the ministers could but come together and say: "Now, let us be honest. Let us tell each other, honour bright," like Dr. Curry, of Chicago, did in the meeting the other day, "just what we believe." They tell a story that in the old time a lot of people, about twenty, were in Texas in a little hotel, and one fellow got up before the fire, put his hands behind him, and said: "Boys, let us all tell our real names." If the ministers and their congregations would only tell their real thoughts, they would find that they are nearly as bad as I am, and that they believe as little.

Orthodoxy dies hard, and its defenders tell us that this fact shows that it is of divine origin. Judaism dies hard. It has lived several thousand years longer than Christianity. The religion of Mohammed dies hard.

Buddhism dies hard. Why do all these religions die hard? Because intelligence increases slowly.

Let me whisper in the ear of the Protestant: Catholicism dies hard. What does that prove? It proves that the people are ignorant, and that the priests are cunning.

Let me whisper in the ear of the

Catholic: Protestantism dies hard. What does that prove? It proves that the people are superstitious and the preachers stupid.

Let me whisper in all your ears: Infidelity is not dying—it is growing—it increases every day. And what does that prove? It proves that the people are learning more and more—that they are advancing—that the mind is getting free, and that the race is being civilised.

The clergy know that I know that they know that they do not know.

THE BLOWS THAT HAVE SHATTERED THE SHIELD AND SHIVERED THE LANCE OF SUPERSTITION.

MOHAMMED.

Mohammed wrested from the disciples of the Cross the fairest part of Europe. It was known that he was an impostor, and that fact sowed the seeds of distrust and infidelity in the Christian world. Christians made an effort to rescue from the infidels the empty sepulchre of Christ. That commenced in the eleventh century, and ended at the close of the thirteenth. Europe was almost depopulated. The fields were left waste, the villages were deserted, nations were impoverished, every man who owed a debt was discharged from payment if he put a cross upon his breast and joined the Crusades. No matter what crime he had committed, the doors of the prison were open for him to join the hosts of the Cross. They believed that God would give them victory, and they carried in front of the first crusade a goat and a goose, believing that both those animals were blessed by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. And I may say that those same animals are in the lead to-day in the orthodox world. Until 1291 they endeavoured to gain possession of that sepulchre, and finally the hosts of Christ were driven back baffled and beaten—a poor, miserable, religious rabble. They were driven back, and that fact sowed the seeds of distrust in Christendom. You know

that at that time the world believed in trial by battle—that God would take the side of the right—and there had been a trial by battle between the cross and the crescent, and Mohammed had been victorious. Was God at that time governing the world? Was he endeavouring to spread his gospel?

THE DESTRUCTION OF ART.

You know that, when Christianity came into power, it destroyed every statue it could lay its ignorant hands upon. It defaced and obliterated every painting; it destroyed every beautiful building; it burned the manuscripts, both Greek and Latin; it destroyed all the history, all the poetry, all the philosophy it could find, and reduced to ashes every library that it could reach with its torch. And the result was that the night of the Middle Ages fell upon the human race. But by accident, by chance, by oversight, a few of the manuscripts escaped the fury of religious zeal; and these manuscripts became the seed, the fruit of which is our civilisation of to-day. A few statues had been buried; a few forms of beauty were dug from the earth that had protected them, and now the civilised world is filled with art, the walls are covered with paintings, and the niches filled with statuary. A few manuscripts were found and deciphered. The old languages were learned, and literature was again born. A new day dawned upon mankind. Every effort at mental improvement had been opposed by the Church, and yet the few things saved from the general wreck—a few poems, a few works of the ancient thinkers, a few forms wrought in stone—produced a new civilisation destined to overthrow and destroy the fabric of superstition.

THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA.

What was the next blow that this Church received? The discovery of America. The Holy Ghost who inspired men to write the Bible did not know of the existence of this Continent, never dreamed of the Western Hemisphere.

The Bible left out half the world. The Holy Ghost did not know that the earth is round. He did not dream that the earth is round. He believed it was flat, although he made it himself. At that time heaven was just beyond the clouds. It was there the gods lived, there the angels were, and it was against that heaven that Jacob's ladder leaned when the angels went up and down. It was to that heaven that Christ ascended after his resurrection. It was up there that the New Jerusalem was, with its streets of gold; and under this earth was perdition. There was where the devils lived; where a pit was dug for all unbelievers, and for men who had brains. I say that for this reason: Just in proportion that you have brains your chances for eternal joy are lessened, according to this religion. And just in proportion that you lack brains your chances are increased. At last they found that the earth is round. It was circumnavigated by Magellan. In 1519 that brave man set sail. The Church told him: "The earth is flat, my friend; don't go, you may fall off the edge." Magellan said: "I have seen the shadow of the earth upon the moon, and I have more confidence in the shadow than I have in the Church." The ship went round. The earth was circumnavigated. Science passed its hand above it, and beneath it, and where was the old heaven and where was the hell? Vanished for ever! And they dwell now only in the religion of superstition. We found there was no place there for Jacob's ladder to lean against; no place there for the gods and angels to live; no place to hold the waters of the deluge; no place to which Christ could have ascended. The foundations of the new Jerusalem crumbled. The towers and domes fell, and in their places infinite space, sown with an infinite number of stars; not with new Jerusalems, but with countless constellations.

COPERNICUS AND KEPLER.

Then man began to grow great, and with that came Astronomy. In 1473

Copernicus was born. In 1543 his great work appeared. In 1616 the system of Copernicus was condemned by the Pope, by the infallible Catholic Church, and the Church was about as near right upon that subject as upon any other. The system of Copernicus was denounced. And how long do you suppose the Church fought that? Let me tell you. It was revoked by Pius VII. in the year of grace 1821. For 278 years after the death of Copernicus the Church insisted that his system was false, and that the old Bible astronomy was true. Astronomy is the first help that we ever received from heaven. Then came Kepler in 1609, and you may almost date the birth of science from the night that Kepler discovered his first law. That was the break of the day. His first law, that the planets do not move in circles but in ellipses; his second law, that they describe equal spaces in equal times; his third law, that the squares of their periodic times are proportional to the cubes of their distances. That man gave us the key to the heavens. He opened the infinite book, and in it read three lines.

I have not time to speak of Galileo, of Leonardo da Vinci, of Bruno, and of hundreds of others who contributed to the intellectual wealth of the world.

SPECIAL PROVIDENCE.

The next thing that gave the Church a blow was statistics. We found by taking statistics that we could tell the average length of human life; that this human life did not depend upon infinite caprice; that it depended upon conditions, circumstances, laws, and facts, and that these conditions, circumstances, and facts were during long periods of time substantially the same. And now the man who depends entirely upon special Providence gets his life insured. He has more confidence even in one of these companies than he has in the whole Trinity. We found by statistics that there were just so many crimes on an average committed; just so many crimes

of one kind and so many of another; just so many suicides, so many deaths by drowning, so many accidents on an average, so many men marrying women, for instance, older than themselves; so many murders of a particular kind; just the same number of mistakes; and I say to-night, statistics utterly demolish the idea of special Providence.

Only the other day a gentleman was telling me of a case of special Providence. He knew it. He had been the subject of it. A few years ago he was about to go on a ship, when he was detained. He did not go, and the ship was lost with all on board. "Yes!" I said, "do you think the people who were drowned believed in special Providence?" Think of the infinite egotism of such a doctrine. Here is a man that fails to go upon a ship with five hundred passengers, and they go down to the bottom of the sea—fathers, mothers, children, and loving husbands and wives waiting upon the shores of expectation. Here is one poor little wretch that did not happen to go! And he thinks that God, the Infinite Being, interfered in his poor little withered behalf and let the rest all go. That is special Providence. Why does special Providence allow all the crimes? Why are the wife-beaters protected, and why are the wives and children left defenceless, if the hand of God is over us all? Who protects the insane? Why does Providence permit insanity? But the Church cannot give up special Providence. If there is no such thing, then no prayers, no worship, no churches, no priests. What would become of National Thanksgiving?

You know we have a custom every year of issuing a proclamation of thanksgiving. We say to God: "Although you have afflicted all the other countries, although you have sent war, and desolation, and famine on everybody else, we have been such good children that you have been kind to us, and we hope you will keep on." It does not make a bit of difference whether we have good times or not—the thanksgiving is always exactly

the same. I remember a few years ago a Governor of Iowa got out a proclamation of that kind. He went on to tell how thankful the people were, and how prosperous the State had been. There was a young fellow in that State who got out another proclamation, saying that he feared the Lord might be misled by official correspondence; that the Governor's proclamation was entirely false; that the State was not prosperous; that the crops had been an almost utter failure; that nearly every farm in the State was mortgaged; and that, if the Lord did not believe him, all he asked was that he would send some angel in whom he had confidence to look the matter over and report.

CHARLES DARWIN.

The nineteenth century will be called Darwin's century. He was one of the greatest men who ever touched this globe. He has explained more of the phenomena of life than all of the religious teachers. Write the name of Charles Darwin on the one hand and the name of every theologian who ever lived on the other, and from that name has come more light to the world than from all of those. His doctrine of evolution, his doctrine of the survival of the fittest, his doctrine of the origin of species, has removed in every thinking mind the last vestige of orthodox Christianity. He has not only stated, but he has demonstrated, that the inspired writer knew nothing of this world, nothing of the origin of man, nothing of geology, nothing of astronomy, nothing of nature; that the Bible is a book written by ignorance—at the instigation of fear. Think of the men who replied to him. Only a few years ago there was no person too ignorant to successfully answer Charles Darwin; and the more ignorant he was the more cheerfully he undertook the task. He was held up to the ridicule, the scorn, and contempt of the Christian world; and yet, when he died, England was proud to put his dust with that of her noblest and her grandest. Charles

Darwin conquered the intellectual world, and his doctrines are now accepted facts.

And yet we are told in this little creed that orthodox religion is about to conquer the world! It will be driven to the wilds of Africa. It must go to some savage country; it has lost its hold upon civilisation. It is unfortunate to have a religion that cannot be accepted by the intellect of a nation. It is unfortunate to have a religion against which every good and noble heart protests. Let us have a good religion or none. My pity has been excited by seeing these ministers endeavour to warp and twist the passages of Scripture to fit the demonstrations of science. Of course, I have not time to recount all the discoveries and events that have assisted in the destruction of superstition. Every fact is an enemy of the Church. Every fact is a heretic. Every demonstration is an infidel. Everything that ever really happened testifies against the supernatural.

The Church teaches that man was created perfect, and that for six thousand years he has degenerated. Darwin demonstrated the falsity of this dogma. He shows that man has for thousands of ages steadily advanced; that the Garden of Eden is an ignorant myth; that the doctrine of original sin has no foundation in fact; that the atonement is an absurdity; that the serpent did not tempt, and that man did not "fall."

Charles Darwin destroyed the foundation of orthodox Christianity. There is nothing left but faith in what we know could not and did not happen. Religion and science are enemies. One is a superstition, the other is a fact. One rests upon the false, the other upon the true. One is the result of fear and faith, the other of investigation and reason.

THE CREEDS.

I have been talking a great deal about the orthodox religion. Often, after having delivered a lecture, I have met

some good, religious person who has said to me:—

“You do not tell it as we believe it.”

“Well, but I tell it as you have it written in your creed.”

“Oh, we don’t mind the creed any more.”

“Then, why do you not change it?”

“Oh, well, we understand it as it is, and, if we tried to change it, maybe we would not agree.”

Possibly the creeds are in the best condition now. There is a tacit understanding that they do not believe them, that there is a way to get around them, and that they can read between the lines; that, if they should meet now to form new creeds, they would fail to agree; and that now they can say as they please, except in public. Whenever they do so in public, the Church, in self-defence, must try them; and I believe in trying every minister that does not preach the doctrine he agrees to. I have not the slightest sympathy with a Presbyterian preacher who endeavours to preach infidelity from a Presbyterian pulpit and receives Presbyterian money. When he changes his views he should step down and out like a man, and say: “I do not believe your doctrine, and I will not preach it. You must hire some other man.”

THE LATEST CREED.

But I find that I have correctly interpreted the creeds. There was put into my hands the new Congregational creed. I have read it, and I will call attention to it now, to find whether that Church has made any advance; to find whether the sun of science has risen in the heavens in vain; whether they are still the children of intellectual darkness; whether they still consider it necessary for you to believe something that you by no possibility can understand, in order to be a winged angel for ever. Now, let us see what their creed is. I will read a little of it.

They commence by saying that they—

“*Believe in one God, the Father*

Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.”

They say, now, that there is the one personal God; that he is the maker of the universe, and its ruler. I again ask the old question, Of what did he make it? If matter had not existed through eternity, then this God made it. Of what did he make it? What did he use for the purpose? There was nothing in the universe except this God. What had the God been doing for the eternity he had been living? He had made nothing—called nothing into existence; never had had an idea, because it is impossible to have an idea unless there is something to excite an idea. What had he been doing? Why does not the Congregational Church tell us? How do they know about this Infinite Being? And, if he is infinite, how can they comprehend him? What good is it to believe in something that you know you do not understand, and that you never can understand?

In the Episcopalian creed God is described as follows:—

“*There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions.*”

Think of that! without body, parts, or passions. I defy any man in the world to write a better description of nothing. You cannot conceive of a finer word-painting of a vacuum than “without body, parts, or passions.” And yet this God, without passions, is angry at the wicked every day; this God, without passions, is a jealous God, whose anger burneth to the lowest hell. This God, without passions, loves the whole human race; and this God, without passions, damns a large majority of mankind. This God, without body, walked in the garden of Eden in the cool of the day. This God, without body, talked with Adam and Eve. This God, without body or parts, met Moses upon Mount Sinai, appeared at the door of the tabernacle, and talked with Moses face to face as a man speaketh to his friend. This description of God is simply an effort of

the Church to describe a something of which it has no conception.

GOD AS A GOVERNOR.

So, too, I find the following:—

"We believe that the providence of God, by which he executes his eternal purposes in the government of the world, is in and over all events."

Is God the governor of the world? Is this established by the history of nations? What evidence can you find, if you are absolutely honest and not frightened, in the history of the world, that this universe is presided over by an infinitely wise and good God?

How do you account for Russia? How do you account for Siberia? How do you account for the fact that whole races of men toiled beneath the master's lash for ages without recompense and without reward? How do you account for the fact that babes were sold from the arms of mothers—arms that had been reached toward God in supplication? How do you account for it? How do you account for the existence of martyrs? How do you account for the fact that this God allows people to be burned simply for loving him? Is justice always done? Is innocence always acquitted? Do the good succeed? Are the honest fed? Are the charitable clothed? Are the virtuous shielded? How do you account for the fact that the world has been filled with pain, and grief, and tears? How do you account for the fact that people have been swallowed by earthquakes, overwhelmed by volcanoes, and swept from the earth by storms? Is it easy to account for famine, for pestilence, and plague if there be above us all a Ruler infinitely good, powerful, and wise?

I do not say there is none. I do not know. As I have said before, this is the only planet I was ever on. I live in one of the rural districts of the universe, and do not know about these things as much as the clergy pretend to; but, if they know no more about the other world

than they do about this, it is not worth mentioning.

How do they answer all this? They say that God "permits" it. What would you say to me if I stood by and saw a ruffian beat out the brains of a child when I had full and perfect power to prevent it? You would say truthfully that I was as bad as the murderer. Is it possible for this God to prevent it? Then, if he does not he is a fiend; he is no God. But they say he "permits" it. What for? So that we may have freedom of choice. What for? So that God may find, I suppose, who are good and who are bad. Did he not know that when he made us? Did he not know exactly just what he was making? Why should he make those whom he knew would be criminals? If I should make a machine that would walk your streets and take the lives of people, you would hang me. And if God made a man whom he knew would commit murder, then God is guilty of that murder. If God made a man, knowing that he would beat his wife, that he would starve his children, that he would strew on either side of his path of life the wrecks of ruined homes, then I say the being who knowingly called that wretch into existence is directly responsible. And yet we are to find the Providence of God in the history of nations. What little I have read shows me that, when man has been helped, man has done it; when the chains of slavery have been broken, they have been broken by man; when something bad has been done in the government of mankind, it is easy to trace it to man, and to fix the responsibility upon human beings. You need not look to the sky; you need throw neither praise nor blame upon gods; you can find the efficient causes nearer home—right here.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

What is the next thing I find in this creed?

"We believe that man was made in the image of God, that he might know, love, and obey God, and enjoy him for ever."

I do not believe that anybody ever did love God, because nobody ever knew anything about him. We love each other. We love something that we know. We love something that our experience tells us is good and great and beautiful. We cannot by any possibility love the unknown. We can love truth, because truth adds to human happiness. We can love justice, because it preserves human joy. We can love charity. We can love every form of goodness that we know, or of which we can conceive; but we cannot love the infinitely unknown. And how can we be made in the image of something that has neither body, parts, nor passions?

THE FALL OF MAN.

The Congregational Church has not outgrown the doctrine of "original sin." We are told that—

"Our first parents, by disobedience, fell under the condemnation of God, and that all men are so alienated from God that there is no salvation from the guilt and power of sin except through God's redeeming power."

Is there an intelligent man or woman now in the world who believes in the Garden of Eden story? If you find any man who believes it, strike his forehead, and you will hear an echo. Does any intelligent man now believe that God made man of dust, and woman of a rib, and put them in a garden, and put a tree in the midst of it? Was there not room outside of the garden to put his tree if he did not want people to eat his apples?

If I did not want a man to eat my fruit, I would not put him in my orchard.

Does anybody now believe in the story of the serpent? I pity any man or woman who, in this enlightened century, believes in that childish fable. Why did Adam and Eve disobey? Why, they were tempted. By whom? The devil. Who made the devil? God. What did God make him for? Why did he not tell Adam and Eve about this serpent?

Why did he not watch the devil, instead of watching Adam and Eve? Instead of turning them out, why did he not keep him from getting in? Why did he not have his flood first, and drown the devil, before he made a man and a woman?

And yet people who call themselves intelligent—professors in colleges, and presidents of venerable institutions—teach children and young men that the Garden of Eden story is an absolute historic fact. I defy any man to think of a more childish thing. This God, waiting around Eden, knowing all the while what would happen, having made them on purpose so that it would happen, then does—what? Holds all of us responsible, and we were not there. Here is a representative before the constituency had been born. Before I am bound by a representative I want a chance to vote for or against him, and if I had been there, and known all the circumstances, I should have voted "No!" And yet, I am held responsible.

We are told by the Bible, and by the Churches, that through this fall of man "*Sin and death entered the world.*"

According to this, just as soon as Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit God began to contrive ways by which he could destroy the lives of his children. He invented all the diseases—all the fevers and coughs and colds, all the pains and plagues and pestilences, all the aches and agonies, the malaria and spores, so that, when we take a breath of air, we admit into our lungs unseen assassins; and, fearing that some might live too long, even under such circumstances, God invented the earthquake and volcano, the cyclone and lightning, animalcules to infest the heart and brain, so small that no eye can detect, no instrument reach. This was all owing to the disobedience of Adam and Eve!

In his infinite goodness, God invented rheumatism and gout and dyspepsia, cancer and neuralgia, and is still inventing new diseases. Not only this, but he

decreed the pangs of mothers, and that by the gates of love and life should crouch the dragons of death and pain. Fearing that some might, by accident, live too long, he planted poisonous vines and herbs that looked like food. He caught the serpents he had made, and gave them fangs and curious organs, ingeniously devised to distil and deposit the deadly drop. He changed the nature of the beasts, that they might feed on human flesh. He cursed a world, and tainted every spring and source of joy. He poisoned every breath of air; corrupted even light, that it might bear disease on every ray; tainted every drop of blood in human veins; touched every nerve, that it might bear the double fruit of pain and joy; decreed all accidents and mistakes that maim and hurt and kill, and set the snares of life-long grief, baited with present pleasure—with a moment's joy. Then and there he foreknew and foreordained all human tears. And yet all this is but the prelude, the introduction, to the infinite revenge of the good God. Increase and multiply all human griefs until the mind has reached imagination's farthest verge, then add eternity to time, and you may faintly tell, but never can conceive, the infinite horrors of this doctrine called "The Fall of Man."

THE ATONEMENT.

We are further told that—

"All men are so alienated from God that there is no alleviation from the guilt and power of sin, except through God's redeeming grace";

And that—

"We believe that the love of God to sinful man has found its highest expression in the redemptive work of his Son, who became man, uniting his divine nature with our human nature in one person; who was tempted like other men, and yet without sin, and by his humiliation, his holy obedience, his sufferings, his death on the cross, and his resurrection, became a perfect redeemer; whose sacrifice of himself for the sins of the world declares the

righteousness of God, and is the sole and sufficient ground of forgiveness and of reconciliation with him."

The absurdity of the doctrine known as "The Fall of Man" gave birth to that other absurdity known as "The Atonement." So that now it is insisted that, as we are rightfully charged with the sin of somebody else, we can rightfully be credited with the virtues of another. Let us leave out of our philosophy both these absurdities. Our creed will read a great deal better with both of them out, and will make far better sense.

Now, in consequence of Adam's sin, everybody is alienated from God. How? Why? Oh, we are all depraved, you know; we all do wrong. Well, why? Is that because we are depraved? No. Why do we make so many mistakes? Because there is only one right way, and there is an almost infinite number of wrong ways; and as long as we are not perfect in our intellects we must make mistakes. "There is no darkness but ignorance," and alienation, as they call it, from God is simply a lack of intellect. Why were we not given better brains? That may account for the alienation.

The Church teaches that every soul that finds its way to the shore of this world is against God—naturally hates God; that the little dimpled child in the cradle is simply a chunk of depravity. Everybody against God! It is a libel upon the human race; it is a libel upon all the men who have worked for wife and child; upon all mothers who have suffered and laboured, wept and worked; upon all the men who have died for their country; upon all who have fought for human liberty. Leave out the history of religion, and there is little left to prove the depravity of man.

Everybody that comes is against God! Every soul, they think, is like the wrecked Irishman, who drifted to an unknown island, and as he climbed the shore saw a man and said to him, "Have you a Government here?" The man

replied, "We have." "Well," said he, "I'm forinst it!"

The Church teaches us that such is the attitude of every soul in the universe of God. Ought a god to take any credit to himself for making depraved people? A god that cannot make a soul that is not totally depraved, I respectfully suggest, should retire from the business. And if a god has made us, knowing that we are totally depraved, why should we go to the same being to be "born again"?

THE SECOND BIRTH.

The Church insists that we must be "born again," and that all who are not the subjects of this second birth are heirs of everlasting fire. Would it not have been much better to have made another Adam and Eve? Would it not have been better to change Noah and his people, so that after that a second birth would not have been necessary? Why not purify the fountain of all human life? Why allow the earth to be peopled with depraved and monstrous beings, each one of whom must be re-made, re-formed, and born again?

And yet, even reformation is not enough. If the man who steals becomes perfectly honest, that is not enough; if the man who hates his fellow man changes and loves his fellow man, that is not enough; he must go through that mysterious thing called the second birth—he must be born again. He must have faith; he must believe something that he does not understand, and experience what they call "conversion." According to the Church, nothing so excites the wrath of God—nothing so corrugates the brows of Jehovah with hatred—as a man relying on his own good works. He must admit that he ought to be damned, and that of the two he prefers it, before God will consent to save him.

I met a man the other day who said to me, "I am a Unitarian Universalist." "What do you mean by that?" I asked. "Well," said he, "this is what I mean: the Unitarian thinks he is too good to be damned, and the Universalist thinks God

is too good to damn him, and I believe them both."

Is it possible that the sacrifice of a perfect being was acceptable to God? Will he accept the agony of innocence for the punishment of guilt? Will he release Barabbas and crucify Christ?

INSPIRATION.

What is the next thing in this great creed?

"We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the record of God's revelation of Himself in the work of redemption; that they were written by men under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit; that they are able to make wise unto salvation; and that they constitute an authoritative standard by which religious teaching and human conduct are to be regulated and judged."

This is the creed of the Congregational Church—that is, the result reached by a high-joint commission appointed to draw up a creed for their Churches; and there we have the statement that the Bible was written "by men under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit."

What part of the Bible? All of it? All of it. And yet what is this Old Testament that was written by an infinitely good God? The being who wrote it did not know the shape of the world he had made; knew nothing of human nature. He commands men to love him, as if one could love upon command. The same God upheld the institution of human slavery; and the Church says that the Bible that upholds that institution was written by men under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Then I disagree with the Holy Spirit.

This Church tells us that men under the guidance of the Holy Spirit upheld the institution of polygamy—I deny it; that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit these men upheld wars of extermination and conquest—I deny it; that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit these men wrote that it was right for a man to destroy the life of his wife if she happened to differ with him on the subject

of religion—I deny it. And yet that is the book now upheld in this creed of the Congregational Church.

If the devil had written upon the subject of slavery, which side would he have taken? Let every minister answer. If you knew the devil had written a work on human slavery, in your judgment would he uphold slavery or denounce it? Would you regard it as any evidence that he ever wrote it if it upheld slavery? And yet here you have a work upholding slavery, and you say that it was written by an infinitely good God! If the devil upheld polygamy, would you be surprised? If the devil wanted to kill men for differing with him, would you be astonished? If the devil told a man to kill his wife, would you be shocked? And yet, you say, that is exactly what God did. If there be a God, then that creed is blasphemy. That creed is a libel upon him who sits on heaven's throne. If there be a God, I ask him to write in the book in which my account is kept that I denied these lies for him.

I do not believe in a slave-holding God! I do not worship a polygamous Holy Ghost, nor a Son who threatens eternal pain; I will not get upon my knees before any being who commands a husband to slay his wife because she expresses her honest thought. Suppose a book should be found old as the Old Testament in which slavery, polygamy, and war are all denounced, would Christians think that it was written by the devil?

Did it ever occur to you that if God wrote the Old Testament, and told the Jews to crucify or kill anybody that disagreed with them on religion, and that this God afterwards took upon himself flesh and came to Jerusalem, and taught a different religion, and the Jews killed him—did it ever occur to you that he reaped exactly what he had sown? Did it ever occur to you that he fell a victim to his own tyranny, and was destroyed by his own hand? Of course, I do not believe that any God ever was the author of the Bible, or that any God was

ever crucified, or that any God was ever killed, or ever will be; but I want to ask you that question.

Take this Old Testament, then, with all its stories of murder and massacre; with all its foolish and cruel fables; with all its infamous doctrines; with its spirit of caste; with its spirit of hatred—and tell me whether it was written by a good God. If you will read the maledictions and curses of that book, you will think that God, like Lear, had divided heaven among his daughters, and then, in the insanity of despair, had launched his curses on the human race.

And yet, I must say, I must admit, that the Old Testament is better than the New. In the Old Testament, when God had a man dead, he let him alone. When he saw him quietly in his grave, he was satisfied. The muscles relaxed, and the frown gave place to a smile. But in the New Testament the trouble commences at death. In the New Testament God is to wreak his revenge for ever and ever. It was reserved for one who said, "Love your enemies," to tear asunder the veil between time and eternity, and fix the horrified gaze of man upon the gulfs of eternal fire. The New Testament is just as much worse than the Old as hell is worse than sleep; just as much worse as infinite cruelty is worse than dreamless rest; and yet the New Testament is claimed to be a gospel of love and peace.

Is it possible that "*The Scriptures constitute the authoritative standard by which religious teaching and human conduct are to be regulated and judged*"?

Are we to judge of conduct by the Old Testament, by the New, or by both? According to the Old, the slaveholder was a just and generous man; a polygamist was a model of virtue. According to the New, the worst can be forgiven and the best can be lost. How can any book be a standard, when the standard itself must be measured by human reason? Is there a standard of a standard? Must not the reason be convinced? and, if so, is not the reason of each man the final

arbiter of that man? If he takes a book as a standard, does he so take it because it is to him reasonable? In what way is the human reason to be ignored? Why should a book take its place, unless the reason has been convinced that the book is the proper standard? If this is so, the book rests upon the reason of those who adopt it. Are they to be saved because they act in accordance with their reason, and are others to be damned because they act by the same standard—their reason? No two are alike. Can we demand of all the same result? Suppose the compasses were not constant to the pole—no two compasses exactly alike—would you expect all ships to reach the same harbour?

THE REIGN OF TRUTH AND LOVE.

I also find in this creed the following:—

"We believe that Jesus Christ came to establish among men the Kingdom of God, the reign of truth and love, of righteousness and peace."

Well, that may have been the object of Jesus Christ. I do not deny it. But what was the result? The Christian world has caused more war than all the rest of the world beside. Most of the cunning instruments of death have been devised by Christians. All the wonderful machinery by which the life is blown from men, by which nations are conquered and enslaved—all these machines have been born in Christian brains. And yet he came to bring peace, they say; but the Testament says otherwise: "I came not to bring peace, but a sword." And the sword was brought. What are the Christian nations doing to-day in Europe? Is there a solitary Christian nation that will trust any other? How many millions of Christians are in the uniform of forgiveness armed with the muskets of love?

There was an old Spaniard on the bed of death, who sent for a priest, and the priest told him that he would have to forgive his enemies before he died. He said, "I have none." "What! no enemies?" "Not one," said the dying

man; "I killed the last one three months ago."

How many millions of Christians are now armed and equipped to destroy their fellow-Christians? Who are the men in Europe crying against war? Who wishes to have the nations disarmed? Is it the Church? No; the men who do not believe in what they call this religion of peace. When there is a war, and when they make a few thousand widows and orphans; when they strew the plain with dead patriots, Christians assemble in their churches and sing "Te Deum Laudamus." Why? Because he has enabled a few of his children to kill some others of his children. This is the religion of peace—the religion that invented the Krupp gun, that will hurl a ball weighing 2,000 pounds through twenty-four inches of solid steel. This is the religion of peace that covers the sea with men-of-war, clad in mail, in the name of universal forgiveness. This is the religion that drills and uniforms five millions of men to kill their fellows.

THE WARS IT BROUGHT.

What effect has this religion had upon the nations of the earth? What have the nations been fighting about? What was the Thirty Years' War in Europe for? What was the war in Holland for? Why was it that England persecuted Scotland? Why is it that England persecutes Ireland even to this day? At the bottom of every one of these conflicts you will find a religious question. The religion of Jesus Christ, as preached by his Church, causes war, bloodshed, hatred, and all uncharitableness; and why? Because they say a certain belief is necessary to salvation. They do not say: If you behave yourself, you will get there; they do not say: If you pay your debts and love your wife, and love your children, and are good to your friends, and your neighbours, and your country, you will get there; that will do you no good; you have got to believe a certain thing. No matter how bad you are, you can instantly be forgiven; and no matter how

good you are, if you fail to believe that which you cannot understand, the moment you get to the day of judgment nothing is left but to damn you, and all the angels will shout "Hallelujah."

What do they teach to-day? Nearly every murderer goes to heaven; there is only one step from the gallows to God, only one jerk between the halter and heaven. That is taught by this Church.

I believe there ought to be a law to prevent the giving of the slightest religious consolation to any man who has been found guilty of murder. Let a Catholic understand that, if he imbrues his hands in his brother's blood, he can have no extreme unction. Let it be understood that he can have no forgiveness through the Church; and let the Protestant understand that, when he has committed that crime, the community will not pray him into heaven. Let him go with his victim. The victim, dying in his sins, goes to hell, and the murderer has the happiness of seeing him there. If heaven grows dull and monotonous, the murderer can again give life to the nerve of pleasure by watching the agony of his victim.

The truth is, Christianity has not made friends; it has made enemies. It is not, as taught, the religion of peace; it is the religion of war. Why should a Christian hesitate to kill a man that his God is waiting to damn? Why should a Christian not destroy an infidel who is trying to assassinate his soul? Why should a Christian pity an unbeliever—one who has rejected the Bible—when he knows that God will be pitiless for ever? And yet we are told, in this creed, that "*we believe in the ultimate prevalence of the Kingdom of Christ over all the earth.*"

What makes you? Do you judge from the manner in which you are getting along now? How many people are being born a year? About fifty millions. How many are you converting a year, really, truthfully? Five or six thousand. I think I have overstated the number. Is orthodox Christianity on the increase? No. There are a hundred times as many

unbelievers in orthodox Christianity as there were ten years ago. What are you doing in the missionary world? How long is it since you converted a Chinaman? A fine missionary religion to send missionaries with their Bibles and tracts to China; but if a Chinaman comes here, mob him, simply to show him the difference between the practical and theoretical workings of the Christian religion. How long since you have had an intelligent convert in India? In my judgment, never; there never has been an intelligent Hindoo converted from the time the first missionary put his foot on that soil; and never, in my judgment, has an intelligent Chinaman been converted since the first missionary touched that shore. Where are they? We hear nothing of them, except in the reports. They get money from poor old ladies trembling on the edge of the grave, and go and tell them stories, how hungry the average Chinaman is for a copy of the New Testament, and paint the sad condition of a gentleman in the interior of Africa without the works of Dr. McCosh, longing for a copy of *The Princeton Review*—in my judgment, a pamphlet that would suit a savage. Thus money is scared from the dying, and frightened from the old and feeble.

About how long is it before this kingdom is to be established? No one objects to the establishment of peace and goodwill. Every good man longs for the time when war shall cease. We are all hoping for a day of universal justice—a day of universal freedom—when man shall control himself, when the passions shall become obedient to the intelligent will. But the coming of that day will not be hastened by preaching the doctrines of total depravity and eternal revenge. That sun will not rise the quicker for preaching salvation by faith. The star that shines above that dawn, the herald of that day, is Science, not Superstition—Reason, not Religion.

To show you how little advance has been made, how many intellectual bats and mental owls still haunt the temple, still roost above the altar, I call you

attention to the fact that the Congregational Church, according to this creed, still believes in the resurrection of the dead; and in their Confession of Faith, attached to the Creed, I find that they also believe in the literal resurrection of the body.

THE RESURRECTION.

Does anybody believe that who has the courage to think for himself? Here is a man, for instance, that weighs 200 pounds, and gets sick and dies, weighing 120; how much will he weigh in the morning of the resurrection? Here is a cannibal who eats another man; and we know that the atoms you eat go into your body and become a part of you. After the cannibal has eaten the missionary, and appropriated his atoms to himself, and then dies, to whom will the atoms belong in the morning of the resurrection? Could the missionary maintain an action of replevin; and, if so, what would the cannibal do for a body? It has been demonstrated, in so far as logic can demonstrate anything, that there is no creation and no destruction in Nature. It has been demonstrated, again and again, that the atoms in us have been in millions of other beings; have grown in the forests and in the grass; have blossomed in flowers, and been in the metals. In other words, there are atoms in each one of us that have been in millions of others; and when we die these atoms return to the earth, again appear in grass and trees, are again eaten by animals, and again devoured by countless vegetable mouths and turned into wood; and yet this Church, in the nineteenth century, in a council composed of, and presided over by, Professors and Presidents of Colleges and theologians, solemnly tells us that it believes in the literal resurrection of the body. This is almost enough to make one despair of the future—almost enough to convince a man of the immortality of the absurd. They know better. There is not one so ignorant but knows better.

THE JUDGMENT DAY.

And what is the next thing?

"We believe in a final judgment, the issues of which are everlasting punishment and everlasting life."

At the final judgment all of us will be there. The thousands, and millions, and billions, and trillions, and quadrillions that have died will be there. The books will be opened, and each case will be called. The sheep and the goats will be divided. The unbelievers will be sent to the left, while the faithful will proudly walk to the right. The saved, without a tear, will bid an eternal farewell to those who loved them here—to those they loved. Nearly all the human race will go away to everlasting punishment, and the fortunate few to eternal life. This is the consolation of the Congregational Church! This is the hope that dispels the gloom of life!

PIOUS EVASIONS.

When the clergy are caught, they give a different meaning to the words, and say the world was not made in seven days. They say "good whiles"—"epochs."

And in this same confession of faith, and in this creed, they say that the Lord's day is holy—every seventh day. Suppose you lived near the North Pole, where the day is three months long. Then which day would you keep? If you could get to the North Pole, you could prevent Sunday from ever overtaking you. You can walk around the other way faster than the world could revolve. How would you keep Sunday then? Suppose we invent something that can go one thousand miles an hour? We can chase Sunday clear around the globe. Is there anything that can be more perfectly absurd than that a space of time can be holy? You might as well talk about a virtuous vacuum. We are now told that the Bible is not a scientific book, and that after all we cannot depend on what God said 4,000 years ago—that his ways are not as our ways—that we must accept without evidence, and believe without understanding.

I heard the other night of an old man. He was not very well educated, and he got into the notion that he must have reading of the Bible and family worship. There was a bad boy in the family, and they were reading the Bible by course. In the fifteenth chapter of Corinthians is this passage: "Behold, brethren, I show you a mystery; we shall not all die, but we shall all be changed." This boy had rubbed out the "c" in "changed." So when the old man put on his spectacles, and got down his Bible, he read: "Behold, brethren, I show you a mystery; we shall not all die, but we shall all be hanged." The old lady said, "Father, I don't think it reads that way." He said, "Who is reading this?" "Yes, mother, it says 'hanged,' and, more than that, I see the sense of it. Pride is the besetting sin of the human heart, and, if there is anything calculated to take the pride out of a man, it is hanging." It is in this way that ministers avoid and explain the discoveries of science.

People ask me, if I take away the Bible, what are we going to do? How can we get along without the revelation that no one understands? What are we going to do if we have no Bible to quarrel about? What are we to do without hell? What are we going to do with our enemies? What are we going to do with the people we love but don't like?

"NO BIBLE, NO CIVILISATION."

They tell me that there never would have been any civilisation if it had not been for this Bible. The Jews had a Bible; the Romans had not. Which had the greater and the grander government? Let us be honest. Which of those nations produced the greatest poets, the greatest soldiers, the greatest orators, the greatest statesmen, the greatest sculptors? Rome had no Bible. God cared nothing for the Roman Empire. He let the men come up by chance. His time was taken up with the Jewish people. And yet Rome conquered the world, including the chosen people of God. The people who had

the Bible were defeated by the people who had not. How was it possible for Lucretius to get along without the Bible? How did the great and glorious of that empire? And what shall we say of Greece? No Bible. Compare Athens with Jerusalem. From Athens come the beauty and intellectual grace of the world. Compare the mythology of Greece with the mythology of Judea; one covering the earth with beauty, and the other filling heaven with hatred and injustice. The Hindoos had no Bible; they had been forsaken by the Creator, and yet they became the greatest metaphysicians of the world. Egypt had no Bible. Compare Egypt with Judea. What are we to do without the Bible? What became of the Jews who had a Bible? Their temple was destroyed, and their city was taken; and they never found real prosperity until their God deserted them. The Turks attributed all their victories to the Koran. The Koran gave them their victories over the believers in the Bible. The priests of each nation have accounted for the prosperity of that nation by its religion.

The Christians mistake an incident for a cause, and honestly imagine that the Bible is the foundation of modern liberty and law. They forget physical conditions, make no account of commerce, care nothing for inventions and discoveries, and ignorantly give the credit to their inspired book.

The foundations of our civilisation were laid centuries before Christianity was known. The intelligence of courage, of self-government, of energy, of industry, that, uniting, made the civilisation of this century, did not come alone from Judea, but from every nation of the ancient world.

MIRACLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

There are many things in the New Testament that I cannot accept as true.

I cannot believe in the miraculous origin of Jesus Christ. I believe he was the son of Joseph and Mary; that Joseph and Mary had been duly and

legally married ; that he was the legitimate offspring of that union. Nobody ever believed the contrary until he had been dead at least 150 years. Neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke ever dreamed that he was of divine origin. He did not say to either Matthew, Mark, or Luke, or to anyone in their hearing, that he was the Son of God, or that he was miraculously conceived. He did not say it. It may be asserted that he said it to John, but John did not write the gospel that bears his name. The angel Gabriel, who, they say, brought the news, never wrote a word upon the subject. The mother of Christ never wrote a word upon the subject. His alleged father never wrote a word upon the subject, and Joseph never admitted the story. We are lacking in the matter of witnesses. I would not believe such a story now. I cannot believe that it happened then. I would not believe people I know, much less would I believe people I do not know.

At that time Matthew and Luke believed that Christ was the son of Joseph and Mary. And why? They say he descended from David, and, in order to show that he was of the blood of David, they gave the genealogy of Joseph. And if Joseph was not his father, why did they not give the genealogy of Pontius Pilate or of Herod? Could they, by giving the genealogy of Joseph, show that he was of the blood of David if Joseph was in no way related to Christ? And yet that is the position into which the Christian world is driven. In the New Testament we find that in giving the genealogy of Christ it says, "who was the son of Joseph," and the Church has interpolated the words, "as was supposed." Why did they give a supposed genealogy? It will not do. And that is a thing that cannot in any way, by any human testimony, be established.

If it is important for us to know that he was the Son of God, I say, then, that it devolves upon God to give us the evidence. Let him write it across the face of the heavens, in every language of man-

kind. If it is necessary for us to believe it, let it grow on every leaf next year. No man should be damned for not believing, unless the evidence is overwhelming. And he ought not to be made to depend upon say so, or upon "as was supposed." He should have it directly, for himself. A man says that God told him a certain thing, and he tells me, and I have only his word. He may have been deceived. If God has a message for me, he ought to tell it to me, and not to somebody that has been dead four or five thousand years, and in another language.

Besides, God may have changed his mind on many things ; he has on slavery and polygamy—at least, according to the Church ; and yet his Church now wants to go and destroy polygamy in Utah with the sword. Why do they not send missionaries there with copies of the Old Testament? By reading the lives of Abraham, and Isaac, and Lot, and a few other patriarchs who ought to have been in the penitentiary, maybe they can soften their hearts.

MORE MIRACLES.

There is another miracle I do not believe—the resurrection. I want to speak about it as we would about any ordinary transaction. In the first place, I do not believe that any miracle was ever performed, and, if there was, you cannot prove it. Why? Because it is altogether more reasonable to believe that the people were mistaken about it than that it happened. And why? Because, according to human experience, we know that people will not always tell the truth, and we never saw a miracle ourselves, and we must be governed by our experience ; and, if we go by our experience, we must say that the miracle never happened—that the witnesses were mistaken.

A man comes into Jerusalem, and the first thing he does is to cure the blind. He lets the light of day visit the night of blindness. The eyes are opened, and the world is again pictured upon the brain. Another man is clothed with

leprosy. He touches him, and the disease falls from him, and he stands pure, and clean, and whole. Another man is deformed, wrinkled, and bent. He touches him, and throws around him again the garment of youth. A man is in his grave, and he says, "Come forth!" And the man walks in life, feeling his heart throb, and his blood going joyously through his veins. They say that actually happened. I do not know.

There is one wonderful thing about the dead people that were raised—we do not hear of them any more. What became of them? If there was a man in this city who had been raised from the dead, I would go to see him to-night. I would say: "Where were you when you got the notice to come back? What kind of a country is it? What kind of opening there for a young man? How did you like it? Did you meet there the friends you had lost? Is there a world without death, without pain, without a tear? Is there a land without a grave, and where good-bye is never heard?" Nobody ever paid the slightest attention to the dead who had been raised. They did not even excite interest when they died the second time. Nobody said: "Why, that man is not afraid. He has been there once. He has walked through the valley of the shadow." Not a word. They pass quietly away.

I do not believe these miracles. There is something wrong somewhere about that business. I may suffer eternal punishment for all this, but I cannot, I do not, believe.

There was a man who did all these things, and thereupon they crucified him. Let us be honest. Suppose a man came into this city and should meet a funeral procession, and say, "Who is dead?" and they should reply, "The son of a widow; her only support." Suppose he should say to the procession, "Halt!" and to the undertaker, "Take out that coffin, unscrew that lid. Young man, I say unto thee, arise!" and the dead should step from the coffin, and in a moment afterwards hold his mother in

his arms. Suppose this stranger should go to your cemetery and find some woman holding a little child in each hand, while the tears fell upon a new-made grave, and he should say to her, "Who lies buried here?" and she should reply, "My husband"; and he should cry, "I say unto thee, oh grave, give up thy dead," and the husband should rise, and in a moment after have his lips upon his wife's, and the little children with their arms around his neck; do you think that the people of this city would kill him? Do you think anyone would wish to crucify him? Do you not rather believe that everyone who had a loved one out in that cemetery would go to him, even upon their knees, and beg him to give back their dead? Do you believe that any man was ever crucified who was the master of death?

Let me tell you that, if there shall ever appear upon this earth the master, the monarch, of death, all human knees will touch the earth. He will not be crucified. All the living who fear death, all the living who have lost a loved one, will bow to him. And yet we are told that this worker of miracles, this man who could clothe dead dust in the throbbing flesh of life, was crucified: I do not believe that he worked the miracles; I do not believe that he raised the dead; I do not believe that he claimed to be the Son of God. These things were told long after he was dead; told because the ignorant multitude demanded mystery and wonder; told because, at that time, the miraculous was believed of all the illustrious dead. Stories that made Christianity powerful then weaken it now. He who gains a triumph in a conflict with a devil will be defeated by science. There is another thing about these foolish miracles. All could have been imitated. Men could pretend to be blind; confederates could feign sickness, and even death.

It is not very difficult to limp or to hold an arm as though it were paralysed; or to say that one is afflicted with "an issue of blood." It is easy to say that the son of a widow was raised from the

dead, and if you fail to give the name of the son, or his mother, or the time and place where the wonder occurred, it is quite difficult to show that it did not happen.

No one can be called upon to disprove anything that has not apparently been established. I say apparently, because there can be no real evidence in support of a miracle.

How could we prove, for instance, the miracle of the loaves and fishes? There were plenty of other loaves and other fishes in the world? Each one of the five thousand could have had a loaf and a fish with him. We would have to show that there was no other possible way for the people to get the bread and fish except by miracle, and then we are only half through. We must then show that they did, in fact, get enough to feed 5,000 people, and that more was left than was had in the beginning.

Of course, this is simply impossible. And let me ask, why was not the miracle substantiated by some of the multitude?

Would it not have been a greater wonder if Christ had *created* instead of multiplied the loaves and fishes?

How can we now prove that a certain person more than 1,800 years ago was possessed by seven devils?

How was it ever possible to prove a thing like that?

How can it be established that some evil spirits could talk while others were dumb, and that the dumb ones were the hardest to control?

If Christ wished to convince his fellow-men by miracles, why did he not do something that could not by any means have been a counterfeit?

Instead of healing a withered arm, why did he not find some man whose arm had been cut off, and make another grow?

If he wanted to raise the dead, why did he not raise some man of importance, someone known to all?

Why did he do his miracles in the obscurity of the village, in the darkness of the hovel?

Why call back to life people so insignificant that the public did not know of their death?

Suppose that in May, 1865, a man had pretended to raise some person by the name of Smith from the dead, and suppose a religion had been founded on that miracle, would it not be natural for people, hundreds of years after the pretended miracle, to ask why the founder of that religion did not raise from the dead Abraham Lincoln, instead of the unknown and obscure Mr. Smith?

How could any man now, in any court, by any known rule of evidence, substantiate one of the miracles of Christ?

Must we believe anything that cannot in any way be substantiated?

If miracles were necessary to convince men eighteen centuries ago, are they not necessary now?

After all, how many men did Christ convince with his miracles? How many walked beneath the standard of the Master of Nature?

How did it happen that so many miracles convinced so few? I will tell you. The miracles were never performed. No other explanation is possible.

It is infinitely absurd to say that a man who cured the sick, the halt, the blind, raised the dead, cast out devils, controlled the winds and waves, created food, and held obedient to his will the forces of the world, was put to death by men who knew his superhuman power, and who had seen his wondrous works. If the crucifixion was public, the miracles were private. If the miracles had been public, the crucifixion could not have been. Do away with the miracles, and the superhuman character of Christ is destroyed. He becomes what he really was—a man. Do away with the wonders, and the teachings of Christ cease to be authoritative. They are then worth the reason, the truth that is in them, and nothing more. Do away with the miracles, and then we can measure the utterances of Christ with the standard of our reason. We are no longer intellectual serfs,

believing what is unreasonable in obedience to the command of a supposed god. We no longer take counsel of our fears, of our cowardice, but boldly defend what our reason maintains.

Christ takes his appropriate place with the other teachers of mankind. His life becomes reasonable and admirable. We have a man who hated oppression; who despised and denounced superstition and hypocrisy; who attacked the heartless Church of his time; who excited the hatred of bigots and priests, and who, rather than be false to his conception of truth, met, and bravely suffered, even death.

THE RESURRECTION.

The miracle of the resurrection I do not and cannot believe. If it was the fact, if the dead Christ rose from the grave, why did he not appear to his enemies? Why did he not visit Pontius Pilate? Why did he not call upon Caiaphas, the high priest? upon Herod? Why did he not again enter the Temple and end the old dispute with demonstration? Why did he not confront the Roman soldiers who had taken money to falsely swear that his body had been stolen by his friends? Why did he not make another triumphal entry into Jerusalem? Why did he not say to the multitude: "Here are the wounds in my feet, and in my hands, and in my side. I am the one you endeavoured to kill, but Death is my slave"? Simply because the resurrection is a myth. It makes no difference with his teachings. They are just as good whether he wrought miracles or not. Twice two are four; that needs no miracle. Twice two are five; a miracle cannot help that. Christ's teachings are worth their effect upon the human race. It makes no difference about miracle or wonder. In that day everyone believed in the impossible. Nobody had any standing as teacher, philosopher, governor, king, general, about whom there was not supposed to be something miraculous. The earth was covered with the sons and daughters of gods and goddesses.

In Greece, in Rome, in Egypt, in India, every great man was supposed to have had either a god for his father or a goddess for his mother. They accounted for genius by divine origin. Earth and heaven were at that time near together. It was but a step for the gods from the blue arch to the green earth. Every lake, and valley, and mountain top was made rich with legends of the loves of gods. How could the early Christians have made converts to a man, among a people who believed so thoroughly in gods—in gods that had lived upon the earth; among a people who had erected temples to the sons and daughters of gods? Such people could not have been induced to worship a man—a man born among barbarous people, citizen of a nation weak and poor, and paying tribute to the Roman power. The early Christians, therefore, preached the gospel of a god.

THE ASCENSION.

I cannot believe in the miracle of the ascension—in the bodily ascension of Jesus Christ. Where was he going? In the light shed upon this question by the telescope, I again ask, where was he going? The New Jerusalem is not above us. The abode of the gods is not there. Where was he going? Which way did he go? Of course, that depends upon the time of day he left. If he left in the evening, he went exactly the opposite way from that he would have gone had he ascended in the morning. What did he do with his body? How high did he go? In what way did he overcome the intense cold? The nearest station is the moon, 240,000 miles away. Again I ask, Where did he go? He must have had a natural body, for it was the same body that died. His body must have been material, otherwise he would not, as he rose, have circled with the earth, and he would have passed from the sight of his disciples at the rate of more than a thousand miles per hour.

It may be said that his body was "spiritual." Then what became of the

body that died? Just before his ascension we are told that he partook of broiled fish with his disciples. Was the fish "spiritual"?

Who saw this miracle?

They say the disciples saw it. Let us see what they say. Matthew did not think it was worth mentioning. He does not speak of it. On the contrary, he says that the last words of Christ were: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Is it possible that Matthew saw this, the most miraculous of miracles, and yet forgot to put it in his life of Christ? Think of the little miracles recorded by this Saint, and then determine whether it is probable that he witnessed the ascension of Jesus Christ.

Mark says: "So, then, after the Lord had spoken unto them he was received up into Heaven and sat on the right hand of God." This is all he says about the most wonderful vision that ever astonished human eyes, a miracle great enough to have stuffed credulity to bursting; and yet all we have is this one poor, meagre verse. We know now that most of the last chapter of Mark is an interpolation, and, as a matter of fact, the author of Mark's gospel said nothing about the ascension one way or the other.

Luke says: "And it came to pass, while he blessed them he was parted from them and was carried up into Heaven."

John does not mention it. He gives as Christ's last words this address to Peter: "Follow thou Me." Of course, he did not say that as he ascended. It seems to have made very little impression upon him; he writes the account as though tired of the story. He concludes with an impatient wave of the hand.

In the Acts we have another account. A conversation is given not spoken of in any of the others, and we find there two men clad in white apparel, who said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus that was taken up into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go up into heaven."

Matthew did not see the men in white apparel, did not see the ascension. Mark forgot the entire transaction, and Luke did not think the men in white apparel worth mentioning. John had not confidence enough in the story to repeat it. And yet, upon such evidence, we are bound to believe in the bodily ascension, or suffer eternal pain.

And here let me ask, Why was not the ascension in public?

CASTING OUT DEVILS.

Most of the miracles said to have been wrought by Christ were recorded to show his power over evil spirits. On many occasions he is said to have "cast out devils"—devils who could speak and devils who were dumb.

For many years belief in the existence of evil spirits has been fading from the mind, and, as this belief grew thin, ministers endeavoured to give new meanings to the ancient words. They are inclined now to put "disease" in the place of "devils," and most of them say that the poor wretches supposed to have been the homes of fiends were simply suffering from epileptic fits! We must remember that Christ and these devils often conversed together. Is it possible that fits can talk? These devils often admitted that Christ was God. Can epilepsy certify to divinity? On one occasion the fits told their name, and made a contract to leave the body of a man provided they would be permitted to take possession of a herd of swine. Is it possible that fits carried Christ himself to the pinnacle of a temple? Did fits pretend to be the owner of the whole earth? Is Christ to be praised for resisting such a temptation? Is it conceivable that fits wanted Christ to fall down and worship them?

The Church must not abandon its belief in devils. Orthodoxy cannot afford to put out the fires of hell. Throw away a belief in the devil, and most of the miracles of the New Testament become impossible, even if we admit the supernatural. If there is no devil, who

was the original tempter in the garden of Eden? If there is no hell, from what are we saved; to what purpose is the atonement? Upon the obverse of the Christian shield is God; upon the reverse, the devil. No devil, no hell. No hell, no atonement. No atonement, no preaching, no gospel.

NECESSITY OF BELIEF.

Does belief depend upon evidence? I think it does somewhat in some cases. How is it when a jury is sworn to try a case, hearing all the evidence, hearing both sides, hearing the charge of the Judge, hearing the law, are upon their oaths equally divided, six for the plaintiff, and six for the defendant? Evidence does not have the same effect upon all people. Why? Our brains are not alike. They are not the same shape. We have not the same intelligence, or the same experience, the same sense. And yet I am held accountable for my belief. I must believe in the Trinity—three times one is one, once one is three—and my soul is to be eternally damned for failing to guess an arithmetical conundrum. That is the poisoned part of Christianity—that salvation depends upon belief. That is the accursed part, and until that dogma is discarded Christianity will be nothing but superstition.

No man can control his belief. If I hear certain evidence, I will believe a certain thing. If I fail to hear it, I may never believe it. If it is adapted to my mind, I may accept it; if it is not, I reject it. And what am I to go by? My brain. That is the only light I have from Nature, and if there be a God it is the only torch that this God has given me to find my way through the darkness and night called life. I do not depend upon hearsay for that. I do not have to take the word of any other man, nor get upon my knees before a book. Here in the temple of the mind I consult the God—that is to say, my reason—and the oracle speaks to me and I obey the oracle. What should I obey? Another

man's oracle? Shall I take another man's word—not what he thinks, but what he says some God has said to him?

I would not know a god if I should see one. I have said before, and I say again, the brain thinks in spite of me, and I am not responsible for my thoughts. I cannot control the beating of my heart. I cannot stop the blood that flows through the rivers of my veins. And yet I am held responsible for my belief. Then why does not God give me the evidence? They say he has. In what? In an inspired book. But I do not understand it as they do. Must I be false to my understanding? They say: "When you come to die, you will be sorry if you do not." Will I be sorry when I come to die that I did not live a hypocrite? Will I be sorry that I did not say I was a Christian when I was not? Will the fact that I was honest put a thorn in the pillow of death? Cannot God forgive me for being honest? They say that when he was in Jerusalem he forgave his murderers, but now he will not forgive an honest man for differing from him on the subject of the Trinity.

They say that God says to me, "Forgive your enemies." I say, "I do"; but he says, "I will damn mine." God should be consistent. If he wants me to forgive my enemies, he should forgive his. I am asked to forgive enemies who can hurt me. God is only asked to forgive enemies who cannot hurt him. He certainly ought to be as generous as he asks us to be. And I want no God to forgive me unless I am willing to forgive others, and unless I do forgive others. All I ask, if that be true, is that this God should act according to his own doctrine. If I am to forgive my enemies, I ask him to forgive his. I do not believe in the religion of faith, but of kindness, of good deeds. The idea that man is responsible for his belief is at the bottom of religious intolerance and persecution.

How inconsistent these Christians are! In St. Louis the other day I read an

interview with a Christian minister—one who is now holding a revival. They call him the boy-preacher—a name that he has borne for fifty or sixty years. The question was whether, in these revivals, when they were trying to rescue souls from eternal torture, they would allow coloured people to occupy seats with white people; and that revivalist, preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, said he would not allow the coloured people to sit with white people; they must go to the back of the church. These same Christians tell us that in heaven there will be no distinction; that Christ cares nothing for the colour of the skin; that in Paradise white and black will sit together, swap harps, and cry hallelujah in chorus; yet this minister, believing, as he says he does, that all men who fail to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will eternally perish, was not willing that a coloured man should sit by a white man and hear the gospel of everlasting peace.

According to this revivalist, the ship of the world is going down; Christ is the only lifeboat; and yet he is not willing that a coloured man, with a soul to save, shall sit by the side of a white brother, and be rescued from eternal death. He admits that the white brother is totally depraved; that if the white brother had justice done him he would be damned; that it is only through the wonderful mercy of God that the white man is not in hell; and yet such a being, totally depraved, is too good to sit by a coloured man! Total depravity becomes arrogant; total depravity draws the colour-line in religion, and an ambassador of Christ says to the black man, "Stand away; let your white brother hear first about the love of God."

I believe in the religion of humanity. It is far better to love our fellow-men than to love God. We can help them. We cannot help him. We had better do what we can than be always pretending to do what we cannot.

Virtue is of no colour; kindness, justice, and love, of no complexion.

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

Now I come to the last part of this creed—the doctrine of eternal punishment. I have concluded that I will never deliver a lecture in which I will not attack the doctrine of eternal pain. That part of the Congregational creed would disgrace the lowest savage that crouches and crawls in the jungles of Africa. The man who now, in the nineteenth century, preaches the doctrine of eternal punishment, the doctrine of an eternal hell, has lived in vain. Think of that doctrine! The eternity of punishment! I find in this same creed—in this latest utterance of Congregationalism—that Christ is finally going to triumph in this world and establish his kingdom. This creed declares that "we believe in the ultimate prevalence of the kingdom of God over all the earth." If their doctrine is true, he will never triumph in the other world. The Congregational Church does not believe in the ultimate prevalence of the kingdom of Christ in the world to come. There he is to meet with eternal failure. He will have billions in hell for ever.

In this world we never will be perfectly civilised as long as a gallows casts its shadows upon the earth. As long as there is a penitentiary, within the walls of which a human being is immured, we are not a perfectly civilised people. We will never be perfectly civilised until we do away with crime. And yet, according to this Christian religion, God is to have an eternal penitentiary; he is to be an everlasting gaoler, an everlasting turnkey, a warden of an infinite dungeon, and he is going to keep prisoners there for ever, not for the purpose of reforming them—because they are never going to get any better, only worse—but for the purpose of purposeless punishment. And for what? For something they failed to believe in this world. Born in ignorance, supported by poverty, caught in the snares of temptation, deformed by toil, stupefied by want—and yet held responsible through the countless ages of

eternity! No man can think of a greater horror; no man can dream of a greater absurdity. For the growth of that doctrine ignorance was soil and fear was rain. It came from the fanged mouths of serpents, and yet it is called "glad tidings of great joy."

SOME WHO ARE DAMNED.

We are told "God so loved the world" that he is going to damn almost everybody. If this orthodox religion be true, some of the greatest, and grandest, and best who ever lived are suffering God's torments to-night. It does not appear to make much difference with the members of the Church. They go right on enjoying themselves about as well as ever. If this doctrine is true, Benjamin Franklin, one of the wisest and best of men, who did so much to give us here a free government, is suffering the tyranny of God to-night, although he endeavoured to establish freedom among men. If the Churches were honest, their preachers would tell their hearers: "Benjamin Franklin is in hell, and we warn all the youth not to imitate Benjamin Franklin. Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, with its self-evident truths, has been damned these many years." That is what all the ministers ought to have the courage to say. Talk as you believe. Stand by your creed, or change it. I want to impress it upon your minds, because the thing I wish to do in this world is to put out the fires of hell. I will keep on as long as there is one little red coal left in the bottomless pit. As long as the ashes are warm I shall denounce this infamous doctrine.

I want you to know that, according to this creed, the men who founded this great and splendid Government are in hell to-night. Most of the men who fought in the Revolutionary War, and wrested from the clutch of Great Britain this continent, have been rewarded by the eternal wrath of God. Thousands of the old Revolutionary soldiers are in torment to-night. Let the preachers have

the courage to say so. The men who fought in 1812, and gave to the United States the freedom of the seas, have nearly all been damned. Thousands of heroes who served our country in the Civil War, hundreds who starved in prisons, are now in the dungeons of God, compared with which Andersonville was Paradise. The greatest of heroes are there; the greatest of poets, the greatest scientists, the men who have made the world beautiful—they are all among the damned, if this creed is true.

Humboldt, who shed light, and who added to the intellectual wealth of mankind; Goethe, and Schiller, and Lessing, who almost created the German language—all gone—all suffering the wrath of God to-night, and every time an angel thinks of one of those men he gives his harp an extra twang. Laplace, who read the heavens like an open book—he is there. Robert Burns, the poet of human love—he is there. He wrote "Holy Willie's Prayer." He fastened on the cross the Presbyterian creed, and there it is, a lingering crucifixion. Robert Burns increased the tenderness of the human heart. Dickens put a shield of pity before the flesh of childhood—God is getting even with him. Our own Ralph Waldo Emerson, although he had a thousand opportunities to hear Methodist clergymen, scorned the means of grace, lived to his highest ideal, gave to his fellow-men his best and truest thought, and yet his spirit is the sport and prey of fiends to-night.

Longfellow, who has refined thousands of homes, did not believe in the miraculous origin of the Saviour, doubted the report of Gabriel, loved his fellow-men, did what he could to free the slaves, to increase the happiness of man; yet God was waiting for his soul—waiting to cast him out and down for ever. Thomas Paine, author of the *Rights of Man*, offering his life in both hemispheres for the freedom of the human race, one of the founders of this Republic, is now among the damned; and yet it seems to me that, if he could only get God's

attention long enough to point him to the American flag, he would let him out. Auguste Comte, author of the *Positive Philosophy*, who loved his fellow-men to that degree that he made of humanity a god, who wrote his great work in poverty, with his face covered with tears—they are getting their revenge on him now.

Voltaire, who abolished torture in France; who did more for human liberty than any other man, living or dead; who was the assassin of superstition, and whose dagger still rusts in the heart of Catholicism—he is with the rest. All the priests who have been translated have had their happiness increased by looking at Voltaire.

Giordano Bruno, the first star of the morning after the long night; Benedict Spinoza, the pantheist, the metaphysician, the pure and generous man; Diderot, the encyclopædist, who endeavoured to get all knowledge in a small compass, so that he could put the peasant on an equality intellectually with the prince; Diderot, who wished to sow all over the world the seed of knowledge, and loved to labour for mankind, while the priests wanted to burn, who did all he could to put out the fires—he was lost, long, long ago. His cry for water has become so common that his voice is now recognised through all the realms of heaven, and the angels, laughing, say to one another, "That is Diderot."

David Hume, the Scotch philosopher, is there, with his inquiry about the "Human Understanding" and his argument against miracles. Beethoven, master of music, and Wagner, the Shakespeare of harmony, who made the air of this world rich for ever, they are there; and to-night they have better music in hell than in heaven!

Shelley, whose soul, like his own "Skylark," was a winged joy, has been damned for many, many years; and Shakespeare, the greatest of the human race, who did more to elevate mankind than all the priests who ever lived and died, he is there; but founders of inquisitions, builders of dungeons, makers of

chains, inventors of instruments of torture, tearers, and burners, and branders of human flesh, stealers of babes, and sellers of husbands and wives and children, and they who kept the horizon lurid with the faggot's flame for a thousand years—are in heaven to-night. I wish heaven joy!

That is the doctrine with which we are polluting the souls of children. That is the doctrine that puts a fiend by the dying bed and a prophecy of hell over every cradle. That is "glad tidings of great joy."

Only a little while ago, when the great flood came upon the Ohio, sent by him who is ruling the world and paying particular attention to the affairs of nations, just in the grey of the morning they saw a house floating down, and on its top a human being. A few men went out to the rescue. They found there a woman—a mother—and they wished to save her life. She said: "No, I am going to stay where I am. In this house I have three dead babes; I will not desert them." Think of a love so limitless—stronger and deeper than despair and death! And yet the Christian religion says that if that woman, that mother, did not happen to believe in their creed, God would send her soul to eternal fire! If there is another world, and if in heaven they wear hats, when such a woman climbs the opposite bank of the Jordan Christ should lift his to her.

The doctrine of eternal pain is my trouble with this Christian religion. I reject it on account of its infinite heartlessness. I cannot tell them too often that, during our last war, Christians, who knew that if they were shot they would go right to heaven, went and hired wicked men to take their places, perfectly willing that these men should go to hell provided they could stay at home. You see, they are not honest in it, or they do not believe it, or, as the people say, "they don't sense it." They have not imagination enough to conceive what it is they believe, and what a terrific falsehood they assert. And I beg of everyone who

hears me to-night, I beg, I implore, I beseech you, never to give another dollar to build a church in which that lie is preached. Never give another cent. to send a missionary with his mouth stuffed with that falsehood to a foreign land. Why, they say, the heathen will go to heaven, anyway, if you let them alone. What is the use of sending them to hell by enlightening them? Let them alone. The idea of going and telling a man a thing that if he does not believe he will be damned, when the chances are ten to one that he will not believe it, is monstrous. Do not tell him here, and, as quick as he gets to the other world and finds it is necessary to believe, he can say "Yes." Give him a chance.

ANOTHER OBJECTION.

My objection to orthodox religion is that it destroys human love, and tells us that the love of this world is not necessary to make a heaven in the next.

No matter about your wife, your children, your brother, your sister—no matter about all the affections of the human heart—when you get there, you will be with the angels. I do not know whether I would like the angels. I do not know whether the angels would like me. I would rather stand by the ones who have loved me and whom I know; and I can conceive of no heaven without the loved of this earth. That is the trouble with this Christian religion. Leave your father, leave your mother, leave your wife, leave your children, leave everything, and follow Jesus Christ. I will not. I will stay with my people. I will not sacrifice on the altar of a selfish fear all the grandest and noblest promptings of my heart.

Do away with human love, and what are we? What would we be in another world, and what would we be here? Can anyone conceive of music without human love? Of art, or joy? Human love builds every home. Human love is the author of all beauty. Love paints every picture, and chisels every statue. Love builds every fireside. What could heaven

be without human love? And yet that is what we are promised—a heaven with your wife lost, your mother lost, some of your children gone. And you expect to be made happy by falling in with some angel! Such a religion is infamous. Christianity holds human love for naught; and yet:—

LOVE is the only bow on Life's dark cloud. It is the Morning and the Evening Star. It shines upon the cradle of the babe, and sheds its radiance on the quiet tomb. It is the mother of Art—inspirer of poet, patriot, and philosopher. It is the air and light of every heart—builder of every home—kindler of every fire on every hearth. It was the first to dream of immortality. It fills the world with melody, for Music is the voice of Love. Love is the magician, the enchanter, that changes worthless things to joy, and makes right royal kings and queens of common clay. It is the perfume of that wondrous flower—the heart—and without that sacred passion, that divine swoon, we are less than beasts—but with it earth is heaven, and we are gods.

And how are you to get to this heaven? On the efforts of another. You are to be a perpetual heavenly pauper, and you will have to admit through all eternity that you never would have been there if you had not been frightened. "I am here," you will say, "I have these wings, I have this musical instrument, because I was scared. I am here. The ones who loved me are among the damned; the ones I loved are also there—but I am here, that is enough."

What a glorious world heaven must be! No reformation in that world—not the slightest. If you die in Arkansas, that is the end of you! Think of telling a boy in the next world, who lived and died in Delaware, that he had been fairly treated! Can anything be more infamous?

All on an equality—the rich and the poor, those with parents loving them, those with every opportunity for education, on an equality with the poor, the

abject, and the ignorant—and this little day called life, this moment with a hope, a shadow, and a tear, this little space between your mother's arms and the grave, balances eternity.

God can do nothing for you when you get there. A Methodist preacher can do more for the soul here than its creator can there. The soul goes to heaven, where there is nothing but good society; no bad examples; and they are all there, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and yet they can do nothing for that poor unfortunate except to damn him. Is there any sense in that?

Why should this be a period of probation? It says in the Bible, I believe, "Now is the accepted time." When does that mean? That means whenever the passage is pronounced. "Now is the accepted time." It will be the same to-morrow, will it not? And just as appropriate then as to-day, and, if appropriate at any time, appropriate through all eternity.

What I say is this: There is no world—there can be no world—in which every human being will not have the eternal opportunity of doing right.

That is my objection to this Christian religion; and if the love of earth is not the love of heaven, if those we love here are to be separated from us there, then I want eternal sleep. Give me a good cool grave rather than the furnace of Jehovah's wrath. I pray the angel of the resurrection to let me sleep. Gabriel, do not blow! Let me alone! If, when the grave bursts, I am not to meet the faces that have been my sunshine in this life, let me sleep. Rather than that this doctrine of endless punishment should be true, I would gladly see the fabric of our civilisation crumbling fall to unmeaning chaos, and to formless dust, where oblivion broods, and even memory forgets. I would rather that the blind Samson of some imprisoned force, released by chance, should so wreck and strand the mighty world that man in stress and strain of want and fear should shudderingly crawl back to savage and

barbaric night. I would rather that every planet would, in its orbit, wheel a barren star!

WHAT I BELIEVE.

I think it is better to love your children than to love God, a thousand times better, because you can help them, and I am inclined to think that God can get along without you. Certainly, we cannot help a being without body, parts, or passions!

I believe in the religion of the family. I believe that the roof-tree is sacred, from the smallest fibre held in the soft moist clasp of the earth to the smallest blossom on the topmost bough that gives its fragrance to the happy air. The family where virtue dwells with love is like a lily with a heart of fire—the fairest flower in all this world. And I tell you God cannot afford to damn a man in the next world who has made a happy family in this. God cannot afford to cast over the battlements of heaven the man who has a happy home upon this earth. God cannot afford to be unpitying to a human heart capable of pity. God cannot clothe with fire the man who has clothed the naked here; and God cannot send to eternal pain a man who has done something towards improving the condition of his fellow-man. If he can, I had rather go to hell than to heaven and keep the company of such a God.

IMMORTALITY.

They tell me that the next terrible thing I do is to take away the hope of immortality! I do not, I would not, I could not. Immortality was first dreamed of by human love; and yet the Church is going to take human love out of immortality. We love; therefore, we wish to live. A loved one dies, and we wish to meet again; and from the affection of the human heart grew the great oak of the hope of immortality. Around that oak have climbed the poisonous vines of superstition. Theologians, pretenders, soothsayers, parsons, priests, popes, bishops, have taken advantage of that.

They have stood by graves and promised heaven. They have stood by graves and prophesied a future filled with pain. They have erected their toll-gates on the highway of life, and have collected money from fear.

Neither the Bible nor the Church gave us the idea of immortality. The Old Testament tells us how we lost immortality, and it does not say a word about another world, from the first mistake in Genesis to the last curse in Malachi. There is not in the Old Testament a burial service.

No man in the Old Testament stands by the dead and says, "We will meet again." From the top of Sinai came no hope of another world.

And when we get to the New Testament, what do we find? "They that are accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection of the dead." As though some would be counted unworthy to obtain the resurrection of the dead. And in another place: "Seek for honour, glory, immortality." If you have it, why seek it? And in another place, "God, who alone hath immortality." Yet they tell us that we get our idea of immortality from the Bible. I deny it.

I would not destroy the faintest ray of human hope, but I deny that we got our idea of immortality from the Bible. It existed long before Moses. We find it symbolised through all Egypt, through all India. Wherever man has lived he has made another world in which to meet the lost of this.

The history of this belief we find in tombs and temples wrought and carved by those who wept and hoped. Above their

dead they laid the symbols of another life.

We do not know. We do not prophesy a life of pain. We leave the dead with Nature, the mother of us all. Under the bow of hope, under the seven-hued arch, let the dead sleep.

If Christ was in fact God, why did he not plainly say there is another life? Why did he not tell us something about it? Why did he not turn the tear-stained hope of immortality into the glad knowledge of another life? Why did he go humbly to his death and leave the world in darkness and in doubt? Why? Because he was a man and did not know.

What consolation has the orthodox religion for the widow of the unbeliever, the widow of a good, brave, kind man? What can the orthodox minister say to relieve the bursting heart of that woman? What can he say to relieve the aching hearts of the orphans as they kneel by the grave of that father, if that father did not happen to be an orthodox Christian? What consolation have they? When a Christian loses a friend, the tears spring from his eyes as quickly as from the eyes of others. Their tears are as bitter as ours. Why? The echoes of the words spoken 1,900 years ago are so low, and the sounds of the clods upon the coffin are so loud; the promises are so far away, and the dead are so near.

We do not know, we cannot say, whether death is a wall or a door; the beginning or end of a day; the spreading of pinions to soar, or the folding for ever of wings; the rise or the set of a sun, or an endless life that brings rapture and love to everyone.

SUPERSTITION

I.

WHAT IS SUPERSTITION?

To believe in spite of evidence or without evidence.

To account for one mystery by another.

To believe that the world is governed by chance or caprice.

To disregard the true relation between cause and effect.

To put thought, intention, and design back of nature.

To believe that mind created and controls matter.

To believe in force apart from substance, or in substance apart from force.

To believe in miracles, spells, and charms, in dreams and prophecies.

To believe in the supernatural.

The foundation of superstition is ignorance, the superstructure is faith, and the dome is a vain hope. Superstition is the child of ignorance and the mother of misery.

In nearly every brain is found some cloud of superstition.

A woman drops a cloth with which she is washing dishes, and she exclaims: "That means company."

Most people will admit that there is no possible connection between dropping the cloth and the coming of visitors. The falling cloth could not have put the visit desire in the minds of people not present, and how could the cloth produce the desire to visit the particular person who dropped it? There is no possible connection between the dropping of the cloth and the anticipated effects.

A man catches a glimpse of the new moon over his left shoulder, and he says: "This is bad luck."

To see the moon over the right or left shoulder, or not to see it, could not by

any possibility affect the moon, neither could it change the effect or influence of the moon on any earthly thing. Certainly the left-shoulder glance could in no way affect the nature of things. All the facts in nature would remain the same as though the glance had been over the right shoulder. We see no connection between the left-shoulder glance and any possible evil effects upon the one who saw the moon in this way.

A girl counts the leaves of a flower, and she says: "One, he comes; two, he tarries; three, he courts; four, he marries; five, he goes away."

Of course, the flower did not grow, and the number of its leaves was not determined, with reference to the courtship or marriage of this girl; neither could there have been any intelligence that guided her hand when she selected that particular flower. So, counting the seeds in an apple cannot in any way determine whether the future of an individual is to be happy or miserable.

Thousands of persons believe in lucky and unlucky days, numbers, signs, and jewels.

Many people regard Friday as an unlucky day—as a bad day to commence a journey, to marry, to make any investment. The only reason given is that Friday is an unlucky day.

Starting across the sea on Friday could have no possible effect upon the winds, or waves, or tides, any more than starting on any other day; and the only possible reason for thinking Friday unlucky is the assertion that it is so.

So it is thought by many that it is dangerous for thirteen people to dine together. Now, if thirteen is a dangerous number, twenty-six ought to be twice as dangerous, and fifty-two four times as terrible.

It is said that one of the thirteen will die in a year. Now, there is no possible relation between the number and the digestion of each, between the number and the individual diseases. If fourteen dine together, there is greater probability, if we take into account only the number, of a death within the year than there would be if only thirteen were at the table.

Overturning the salt is very unlucky, but spilling the vinegar makes no difference.

Why salt should be revengeful and vinegar forgiving has never been told.

If the first person who enters a theatre is cross-eyed, the audience will be small and the "run" a failure.

How the peculiarity of the eyes of the first one who enters changes the intentions of a community, or how the intentions of a community cause the cross-eyed man to go early, has never been satisfactorily explained. Between this so-called cause and the so-called effect there is, so far as we can see, no possible relation.

To wear an opal is bad luck, but rubies bring health. How these stones affect the future, how they destroy causes and defeat efforts, no one pretends to know.

So there are thousands of lucky and unlucky things, warnings, omens, and prophecies; but all sensible, sane, and reasoning human beings know that every one is an absurd and idiotic superstition.

Let us take another step:—

For many centuries it was believed that eclipses of the sun and moon were prophetic of pestilence or famine, and that comets foretold the death of kings, or the destruction of nations, the coming of war or plague. All strange appearances in the heavens—the Northern Lights, circles about the moon, sun dogs, falling stars—filled our intelligent ancestors with terror. They fell upon their knees—did their best with sacrifice and prayer to avoid the threatened disaster. Their faces were ashen with fear as they closed their eyes and cried to the heavens

for help. The clergy, who were as familiar with God then as the orthodox preachers are now, knew exactly the meaning of eclipses and sun dogs and Northern Lights; knew that God's patience was nearly exhausted; that he was then whetting the sword of his wrath, and that the people could save themselves only by obeying the priests, by counting their beads, and doubling their subscriptions.

Earthquakes and cyclones filled the coffers of the Church. In the midst of disasters the miser, with trembling hands, opened his purse. In the gloom of eclipses thieves and robbers divided their booty with God, and poor, honest, ignorant girls, remembering that they had forgotten to say a prayer, gave their little earnings to soften the heart of God.

Now, we know that all these signs and wonders in the heavens have nothing to do with the fate of kings, nations, or individuals; that they had no more reference to human beings than to colonies of ants, hives of bees, or the eggs of insects. We now know that the signs and eclipses, the comets, and the falling stars would have been just the same if not a human being had been upon the earth. We know now that eclipses come at certain times, and that their coming can be exactly foretold.

A little while ago the belief was general that there were certain healing virtues in inanimate things, in the bones of holy men and women, in the rags that had been torn from the foul clothing of still fouler saints, in hairs from martyrs, in bits of wood and rusty nails from the true cross, in the teeth and finger nails of pious men, and in a thousand other sacred things.

The diseased were cured by kissing a box in which was kept some bone, or rag, or bit of wood, some holy hairs, provided the kiss was preceded or followed by a gift—a something for the Church.

In some mysterious way the virtue in the bone, or rag, or piece of wood crept or flowed from the box, took possession of the sick who had the necessary faith,

and in the name of God drove out the devils who were the real disease.

This belief in the efficacy of bones or rags and holy hair was born of another belief—the belief that all diseases were produced by evil spirits. The insane were supposed to be possessed by devils. Epilepsy and hysteria were produced by the imps of Satan. In short, every human affliction was the work of the malicious emissaries of the god of hell. This belief was almost universal, and even in our time the sacred bones are believed in by millions of people.

But to-day no intelligent man believes in the existence of devils—no intelligent man believes that evil spirits cause disease—consequently, no intelligent person believes that holy bones or rags, sacred hairs, or pieces of wood can drive disease out, or in any way bring back to the pallid cheek the rose of health.

Intelligent people now know that the bone of a saint has in it no greater virtue than the bone of any animal; that a rag from a wandering beggar is just as good as one from a saint, and that the hair of a horse will cure disease just as quickly and surely as the hair of a martyr. We now know that all the sacred relics are religious rubbish; that those who use them are for the most part dishonest, and that those who rely on them are almost idiotic.

This belief in amulets and charms, in ghosts and devils, is superstition pure and simple.

Our ancestors did not regard these relics as medicine, having a curative power, but the idea was that evil spirits stood in dread of holy things—that they fled from the bone of a saint, that they feared a piece of the true cross, and that when holy water was sprinkled on a man they immediately left the premises. So these devils hated and dreaded the sound of holy bells, the light of sacred tapers, and, above all, the ever-blessed cross.

In those days the priests were fishers for money, and they used these relics for bait.

II.

Let us take another step:—

This belief in the Devil and evil spirits laid the foundation for another belief—Witchcraft.

It was believed that the Devil had certain things to give in exchange for a soul. The old man, bowed and broken, could get back his youth—the rounded form, the brown hair, the leaping heart of life's morning—if he would sign and seal away his soul. So it was thought that the malicious could by charm and spell obtain revenge, that the poor could be enriched, and that the ambitious could rise to place and power. All the good things of this life were at the disposal of the Devil. For those who resisted the temptations of the Evil One rewards were waiting in another world, but the Devil rewarded here in this life. No one has imagination enough to paint the agonies that were endured by reason of this belief in witchcraft. Think of the families destroyed, of the fathers and mothers cast in prison, tortured and burned, of the firesides darkened, of the children murdered, of the old, the poor and helpless that were stretched on racks, mangled, and flayed!

Think of the days when superstition and fear were in every house, in every mind, when accusation was conviction, when assertion of innocence was regarded as a confession of guilt, and when Christendom was insane.

Now we know that all of these horrors were the result of superstition. Now we know that ignorance was the mother of all the agonies endured. Now we know that witches never lived, that human beings never bargained with any devil, and that our pious savage ancestors were mistaken.

Let us take another step:—

Our fathers believed in miracles, in signs and wonders, eclipses and comets, in the virtues of bones, and in the powers attributed to evil spirits. All these belonged to the miraculous. The world was supposed to be full of magic; the

spirits were sleight-of-hand performers—necromancers. There were no natural causes behind events. A devil wished, and it happened. One who had sold his soul to Satan made a few motions, uttered some strange words, and the event was present. Natural causes were not believed in. Delusion and illusion, the monstrous and miraculous, ruled the world. The foundation was gone—reason had abdicated. Credulity gave tongues and wings to lies, while the dumb and limping facts were left behind—were disregarded and remained untold.

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

An act performed by a master of nature without reference to the facts in nature. This is the only honest definition of a miracle.

If a man could make a perfect circle, the diameter of which was exactly one half the circumference, that would be a miracle in geometry. If a man could make twice four nine, that would be a miracle in mathematics. If a man could make a stone, falling in the air, pass through a space of ten feet the first second, twenty-five feet the second second, and five feet the third second, that would be a miracle in physics. If a man could put together hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen, and produce pure gold, that would be a miracle in chemistry. If a minister were to prove his creed, that would be a theological miracle. If Congress by law would make fifty cents worth of silver worth a dollar, that would be a financial miracle. To make a square triangle would be a most wonderful miracle. To cause a mirror to reflect the faces of persons who stand behind it, instead of those who stand in front, would be a miracle. To make echo answer a question would be a miracle. In other words, to do anything contrary to or without regard to the facts in nature is to perform a miracle.

Now, we are convinced of what is called the "uniformity of nature." We believe that all things act and are acted upon in accordance with their nature;

that under like conditions the results will always be substantially the same; that like ever has and ever will produce like. We now believe that events have natural parents, and that none die childless.

Miracles are not simply impossible, but they are unthinkable by any man capable of thinking.

Now, an intelligent man cannot believe that a miracle ever was, or ever will be, performed.

Ignorance is the soil in which belief in miracles grows.

III.

Let us take another step:—

While our ancestors filled the darkness with evil spirits, enemies of mankind, they also believed in the existence of good spirits. These good spirits sustained the same relation to God that the evil ones did to the Devil. These good spirits protected the faithful from the temptations and snares of the Evil One. They took care of those who carried amulets and charms, of those who repeated prayers and counted beads, of those who fasted and performed ceremonies. These good spirits would turn aside the sword and arrow from the breast of the faithful. They made poison harmless, they protected the credulous, and in a thousand ways defended and rescued the true believer. They drove doubts from the minds of the pious, sowed the seeds of credulity and faith, saved saints from the wiles of women, painted the glories of heaven for those who fasted and prayed, made it possible for the really good to dispense with the pleasures of sense and to hate the Devil.

These angels watched over infants who had been baptised, over persons who had made holy vows, over priests and nuns and wandering beggars who believed.

These spirits were of various kinds. Some had once been men or women, some had never lived in this world, and some had been angels from the commencement. Nobody pretended to know exactly what they were, or exactly

how they looked, or in what way they went from place to place, or how they affected or controlled the minds of men.

It was believed that the king of all these evil spirits was the Devil, and that the king of all the good spirits was God. It was also believed that God was in fact the king of all, and that the Devil himself was one of the children of this God. This God and this Devil were at war, each trying to secure the souls of men. God offered the rewards of eternal joy, and threatened eternal pain. The Devil baited his traps with present pleasure, with the gratification of the senses, with the ecstasies of love, and laughed at the joys of heaven and the pangs of hell. With malicious hand he sowed the seeds of doubt—induced men to investigate, to reason, to call for evidence, to rely upon themselves; planted in their hearts the love of liberty, assisted them to break their chains, to escape from their prisons, and besought them to think. In this way he corrupted the children of men.

Our fathers believed that they could by prayer, by sacrifice, by fasting, by performing certain ceremonies, gain the assistance of this God and of these good spirits. They were not quite logical. They did not believe that the Devil was the author of all evil. They thought that flood and famine, plague and cyclone, earthquake and war, were sometimes sent by God as punishment for unbelief. They fell upon their knees, and with white lips prayed the good God to stay his hand. They humbled themselves, confessed their sins, and filled the heavens with their vows and cries. With priests and prayers they tried to stay the plague. They kissed the relics, fell at shrines, besought the Virgin and the saints; but the prayers all died in the heartless air, and the plague swept on to its natural end. Our poor fathers knew nothing of any science. Back of all events they put spirits, good or bad, angels or demons, gods or devils. To them nothing had what we call a natural cause. Everything was the work of spirits. All was done by the super-

natural, and everything was done by evil spirits that they could do to ruin, punish, mislead, and damn the children of men. This world was a field of battle, and here the hosts of heaven and hell waged war.

IV.

Now, no man in whose brain the torch of reason burns, no man who investigates, who really thinks, who is capable of weighing evidence, believes in signs, in lucky or unlucky days, in lucky or unlucky numbers. He knows that Fridays and Thursdays are alike; that thirteen is no more deadly than twelve. He knows that opals affect the wearer the same as rubies, diamonds, or common glass. He knows that the matrimonial chances of a maiden are not increased or decreased by the number of leaves of a flower or seeds in an apple. He knows that a glance at the moon over the left shoulder is as healthful and lucky as one over the right. He does not care whether the first-comer to a theatre is cross-eyed or hump-backed, bow-legged, or as well-proportioned as Apollo. He knows that a strange cat could be denied asylum without bringing any misfortune to the family. He knows that an owl does not hoot in the full of the moon because a distinguished man is about to die. He knows that comets and eclipses would come if all the folks were dead. He is not frightened by sun dogs, or the Morning of the North when the glittering lances pierce the shield of night. He knows that all these things occur without the slightest reference to the human race. He feels certain that floods would destroy, and cyclones rend, and earthquakes devour; that the stars would shine; that day and night would still pursue each other around the world; that flowers would give their perfume to the air, and light would paint the seven-hued arch upon the dusky bosom of the cloud, if every human being was unconscious dust.

A man of thought and sense does not believe in the existence of the Devil. He feels certain that imps, goblins, demons, and evil spirits exist only in the

imagination of the ignorant and frightened. He knows how these malevolent myths were made. He knows the part they have played in all religions. He knows that for many centuries a belief in these devils, these evil spirits, was substantially universal. He knows that the priest believed as firmly as the peasant. In those days the best educated and the most ignorant were equal dupes. Kings and courtiers, ladies and clowns, soldiers and artists, slaves and convicts, believed as firmly in the Devil as they did in God.

Back of this belief there is no evidence, and there never has been. This belief did not rest on any fact. It was supported by mistakes, exaggerations, and lies. The mistakes were natural, the exaggerations were mostly unconscious, and the lies were generally honest. Back of these mistakes, these exaggerations, these lies, was the love of the marvellous. Wonder listened with greedy ears, with wide eyes, and ignorance with open mouth.

The man of sense knows the history of this belief, and he knows, also, that for many centuries its truth was established by the Holy Bible. He knows that the Old Testament is filled with allusions to the Devil, to evil spirits, and that the New Testament is the same. He knows that Christ himself was a believer in the Devil, in evil spirits, and that his principal business was casting out devils from the bodies of men and women. He knows that Christ himself, according to the New Testament, was not only tempted by the Devil, but was carried by his Satanic Highness to the top of the Temple. If the New Testament is the inspired word of God, then I admit that these devils, these imps, do actually exist, and that they do take possession of human beings.

To deny the existence of these evil spirits, to deny the existence of the Devil, is to deny the truth of the New Testament. To deny the existence of these imps of darkness is to contradict the words of Jesus Christ. If these devils do not exist, if they do not cause disease,

if they do not tempt and mislead their victims, then Christ was an ignorant, superstitious man, insane, an impostor, or the New Testament is not a true record of what he said and what he pretended to do. If we give up the belief in devils, we must give up the inspiration of the Old and New Testament. We must give up the divinity of Christ. To deny the existence of evil spirits is to utterly destroy the foundation of Christianity. There is no half-way ground. Compromise is impossible. If all the accounts in the New Testament of casting out devils are false, what part of the Blessed Book is true?

As a matter of fact, the success of the Devil in the Garden of Eden made the coming of Christ a necessity, laid the foundation for the Atonement, crucified the Saviour, and gave us the Trinity.

If the Devil does not exist, the Christian creeds all crumble, and the superstructure known as "Christianity," built by the fathers, by popes, by priests and theologians—built with mistakes and falsehoods, with miracles and wonders, with blood and flame, with lies and legends borrowed from the savage world—becomes a shapeless ruin.

If we give up the belief in devils and evil spirits, we are compelled to say that a witch never lived. No sensible human being now believes in witchcraft. We know that it was a delusion. We now know that thousands and thousands of innocent men, women, and children were tortured and burned for having been found guilty of an impossible crime; and we also know, if our minds have not been deformed by faith, that all the books in which the existence of witches is taught were written by ignorant and superstitious men. We also know that the Old Testament asserted the existence of witches. According to that Holy Book, Jehovah was a believer in witchcraft, and said to his chosen people: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

This one commandment—this simple line—demonstrates that Jehovah was not only not God, but that he was a poor,

ignorant, superstitious savage. This one line proves beyond all possible doubt that the Old Testament was written by men, by barbarians.

John Wesley was right when he said that to give up belief in witchcraft was to give up the Bible.

Give up the Devil, and what can you do with the Book of Job? How will you account for the lying spirits that Jehovah sent to mislead Ahab?

Ministers who admit that witchcraft is a superstition will read the story of the Witch of Endor—will read it in a solemn, reverential voice—with a theological voice—and will have the impudence to say that they believe it.

It would be delightful to know that angels hover in the air; that they guard the innocent, protect the good; that they bend over the cradles, and give health and happy dreams to pallid babes; that they fill dungeons with the light of their presence, and give hope to the imprisoned; that they follow the fallen, the erring, the outcasts, the friendless, and win them back to virtue, love, and joy. But we have no more evidence of the existence of good spirits than of bad. The angels that visited Abraham and the mother of Samson are as unreal as the ghosts and goblins of the Middle Ages. The angel that stopped the donkey of Balaam, the one who walked in the furnace flames with Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego, the one who slew the Assyrians, and the one who in a dream removed the suspicions of Joseph, were all created by the imagination of the credulous, by the lovers of the marvellous, and they have been handed down from dotage to infancy, from ignorance to ignorance, through all the years. Except in Catholic countries, no winged citizen of the celestial realm has visited the world for hundreds of years. Only those who are blind to facts can see these beautiful creatures, and only those who reach conclusions without the assistance of evidence can believe in their existence. It is told that the great Angelo, in decorating a church, painted some angels wear-

ing sandals. A cardinal looking at the picture said to the artist: "Whoever saw angels with sandals?" Angelo answered with another question: "Whoever saw an angel barefooted?"

The existence of angels has never been established. Of course, we know that millions and millions have believed in seraphim and cherubim; have believed that the angel Gabriel contended with the devil for the body of Moses; that angels shut the mouths of the lions for the protection of Daniel; that angels ministered unto Christ, and that countless angels will accompany the Saviour when he comes to take possession of the world. And we know that all these millions believe through blind, unreasoning faith, holding all evidence and all facts in theological contempt.

But the angels come no more. They bring no balm to any wounded heart. Long ago they folded their pinions and faded from the earth and air. These winged guardians no longer protect the innocent; no longer cheer the suffering; no longer whisper words of comfort to the helpless. They have become dreams—vanished visions.

V.

In the dear old religious days the earth was flat—a little dishing, if anything—and just above it was Jehovah's house, and just below it was where the Devil lived. God and his angels inhabited the third storey, the Devil and his imps the basement, and the human race the second floor.

Then they knew where heaven was. They could almost hear the harps and hallelujahs. They knew where hell was, and they could almost hear the groans and smell the sulphurous fumes. They regarded the volcanoes as chimneys. They were perfectly acquainted with the celestial, the terrestrial, and the infernal. They were quite familiar with the New Jerusalem, with its golden streets and gates of pearl. Then the translation of Enoch seemed reasonable enough, and no one doubted that before the Flood

the Sons of God came down and made love to the daughters of men. The theologians thought that the builders of Babel would have succeeded if God had not come down and caused them to forget the meaning of words.

In those blessed days the priests knew all about heaven and hell. They knew that God governed the world by hope and fear, by promise and threat, by reward and punishment. The reward was to be eternal, and so was the punishment. It was not God's plan to develop the human brain, so that man would perceive and comprehend the right and avoid the wrong. He taught ignorance nothing but obedience, and for obedience he offered eternal joy. He loved the submissive—the kneelers and crawlers. He hated the doubters, the investigators, the thinkers, the philosophers. For them he created the eternal prison where he could feed for ever the hunger of his hate. He loved the credulous—those who believed without evidence—and for them he prepared a home in the realm of fadeless light. He delighted in the company of the questionless.

But where is this heaven, and where is this hell? We now know that heaven is not just above the clouds, and that hell is not just below the earth. The telescope has done away with the ancient heaven, and the revolving world has quenched the flames of the ancient hell. These theological countries, these imagined worlds, have disappeared. No one knows, and no one pretends to know, where heaven is; and no one knows, and no one pretends to know, the locality of hell. Now the theologians say that hell and heaven are not places, but states of mind—conditions.

The belief in gods and devils has been substantially universal. Back of the good, man placed a god; back of the evil, a devil; back of health, sunshine, and harvest was a good deity; back of disease, misfortune, and death he placed a malicious fiend.

Is there any evidence that gods and devils exist? The evidence of the exist-

ence of a god and of a devil is substantially the same. Both of these deities are inferences; each one is a perhaps. They have not been seen—they are invisible—and they have not ventured within the horizon of the senses. The old lady who said there must be a devil, else how could they make pictures that looked exactly like him, reasoned like a trained theologian—like a doctor of divinity.

Now no intelligent man believes in the existence of a devil—no longer fears the leering fiend. Most people who think have given up a personal God, a creative deity. They now talk about the "Unknown," the "Infinite Energy," but they put Jehovah with Jupiter. They regard them both as broken dolls from the nursery of the past.

The men or women who ask for evidence—who desire to know the truth—care nothing for signs; nothing for what are called wonders; nothing for lucky or unlucky jewels, days, or numbers; nothing for charms or amulets; nothing for comets or eclipses, and have no belief in good or evil spirits, in gods or devils. They place no reliance on general or special providence—on any power that rescues, protects, and saves the good or punishes the vile and vicious. They do not believe that in the whole history of mankind a prayer has been answered. They think that all the sacrifices have been wasted, and that all the incense has ascended in vain. They do not believe that the world was created and prepared for man, any more than it was created and prepared for insects. They do not think it probable that whales were invented to supply the Eskimo with blubber, or that flames were created to attract and destroy moths. On every hand there seems to be evidence of design—design for the accomplishment of good, design for the accomplishment of evil. On every side are the benevolent and malicious—something toiling to preserve, something labouring to destroy. Everything surrounded by friends and enemies—by the love that protects, by

the hate that kills. Design is as apparent in decay as growth; in failure, as success; in grief, as joy. Nature with one hand building, with one hand tearing down, armed with sword and shield—slaying and protecting, and protecting but to slay. All life journeying towards death, and all death hastening back to life. Everywhere waste and economy, care and negligence.

We watch the flow and ebb of life and death—the great drama that for ever holds the stage, where players act their parts and disappear; the great drama in which all must act—ignorant and learned, idiotic and insane—without rehearsal, and without the slightest knowledge of a part, or of any plot or purpose in the play. The scene shifts; some actors disappear and others come, and again the scene shifts; mystery everywhere. We try to explain, and the explanation of one fact contradicts another. Behind each veil removed, another. All things equal in wonder. One drop of water as wonderful as all the seas; one grain of sand as all the world; one moth with painted wings as all the things that live; one egg from which warmth, in darkness, woos to life an organised and breathing form—a form with sinews, bones, and nerves, with blood and brain, with instincts, passions, thoughts, and wants—as all the stars that wheel in space.

The smallest seed that, wrapped in soil, has dreams of April rains and days of June, withholds its secret from the wisest men. The wisdom of the world cannot explain one blade of grass, the faintest motion of the smallest leaf. And yet theologians, popes, priests, parsons, who speechless stand before the wonder of the smallest thing that is, know all about the origin of worlds, know when the beginning was, when the end will be, know all about the God who, with a wish, created all, know what his plan and purpose was, the means he uses, and the end he seeks. To them all mysteries have been revealed, except the mystery of things that touch the senses of a living man.

But honest men do not pretend to know; they are candid and sincere; they love the truth; they admit their ignorance, and they say, "We do not know."

After all, why should we worship our ignorance? Why should we kneel to the Unknown, why should we prostrate ourselves before a guess?

If God exists, how do we know that he is good, that he cares for us? The Christians say that their God has existed from eternity; that he for ever has been, and for ever will be, infinite, wise, and good. Could this God have avoided being God? Could he have avoided being good? Was he wise and good without his wish or will?

Being from eternity, he was not produced. He was back of all cause. What he is, he was, and will be, unchanged, unchangeable. He had nothing to do with the making or developing of his character; nothing to do with the development of his mind. What he was, he is; he has made no progress. What he is, he will be; there can be no change. Why, then, I ask, should we praise him? He could not have been different from what he was and is. Why should we pray to him—he cannot change?

And yet Christians implore their God not to do wrong.

The meanest thing charged against the Devil is that he leads the children of men into temptation; and yet, in the Lord's Prayer, God is insultingly asked not to imitate the king of fiends.

"Lead us not into temptation."

Why should God demand praise? He is as he was. He has never learned anything; has never practised any self-denial; was never tempted, never touched by fear or hope, and never had a want. Why should he demand our praise?

Does anyone know that this God exists; that he ever heard or answered any prayer? Is it known that he governs the world; that he interferes in the affairs of men; that he protects the good or punishes the wicked? Can evidence of this be found in the history of mankind? If God governs the world, why should

we credit him for the good and not charge him with the evil? To justify this God we must say that good is good, and that evil is also good. If all is done by this God, we should make no distinction between his actions—between the actions of the infinitely wise, powerful, and good. If we thank him for sunshine and harvest, we should also thank him for plague and famine. If we thank him for liberty, the slave should raise his chained hands in worship and thank God that he toils unpaid with the lash upon his naked back. If we thank him for victory, we should thank him for defeat.

Only a few days ago our President, by proclamation, thanked God for giving us the victory at Santiago. He did not thank him for sending the yellow fever. To be consistent, the President should have thanked him equally for both.

The truth is that good and evil spirits—gods and devils—are beyond the realm of experience; beyond the horizon of our senses; beyond the limits of our thoughts; beyond imagination's utmost flight.

Man should think; he should use all his senses; he should examine; he should reason. The man who cannot think is less than man; the man who will not think is traitor to himself; the man who fears to think is superstition's slave.

VI.

What harm does superstition do? What harm in believing in fables, in legends?

To believe in signs and wonders, in amulets, charms, and miracles, in gods and devils, in heavens and hells, makes the brain an insane ward, the world a madhouse, takes all certainty from the mind, makes experience a snare, destroys the kinship of effect and cause—the unity of nature—and makes man a trembling serf and slave. With this belief a knowledge of nature sheds no light upon the path to be pursued. Nature becomes a puppet of the unseen powers. The fairy, called the supernatural, touches with her

wand a fact; it disappears. Causes are barren of effects, and effects are independent of all natural causes. Caprice is king. The foundation is gone. The great dome rests on air. There is no constancy in qualities, relations, or results. Reason abdicates, and superstition wears her crown.

The heart hardens and the brain softens.

The energies of man are wasted in a vain effort to secure the protection of the supernatural. Credulity, ceremony, worship, sacrifice, and prayer take the place of honest work, of investigation, of intellectual effort, of observation, of experience. Progress becomes impossible.

Superstition is, always has been, and for ever will be, the enemy of liberty.

Superstition created all the gods and angels, all the devils and ghosts, all the witches, demons, and goblins, gave us all the augurs, soothsayers, and prophets, filled the heavens with signs and wonders, broke the chain of cause and effect, and wrote the history of man in miracles and lies. Superstition made all the popes, cardinals, bishops, and priests, all the monks and nuns, the begging friars, and the filthy saints, all the preachers and exhorters, all the "called" and "set apart." Superstition made men fall upon their knees before beasts and stones, caused them to worship snakes and trees and insane phantoms of the air, beguiled them of their gold and toil, and made them shed their children's blood and give their babes to flames. Superstition built the cathedrals and temples, all the altars, mosques, and churches, filled the world with amulets and charms, with images and idols, with sacred bones and holy hairs, with martyrs' blood and rags, with bits of wood that frighten devils from the breasts of men. Superstition invented and used the instruments of torture, flayed men and women alive, loaded millions with chains, and destroyed hundreds of thousands with fire. Superstition mistook insanity for inspiration, and the ravings of maniacs for

prophecy, for the wisdom of God. Superstition imprisoned the virtuous, tortured the thoughtful, killed the heroic, put chains on the body, manacles on the brain, and utterly destroyed the liberty of speech. Superstition gave us all the prayers and ceremonies; taught all the kneelings, genuflections, and prostrations; taught men to hate themselves, to despise pleasure, to scar their flesh, to grovel in the dust, to desert their wives and children, to shun their fellow-men, and to spend their lives in useless pain and prayer. Superstition taught that human love is degrading, low, and vile; taught that monks are purer than fathers, that nuns are holier than mothers, that faith is superior to fact, that credulity leads to heaven, that doubt is the road to hell, that belief is better than knowledge, and that to ask for evidence is to insult God. Superstition is, always has been, and for ever will be, the foe of progress, the enemy of education, and the assassin of freedom. It sacrifices the known to the unknown, the present to the future, this actual world to the shadowy next. It has given us a selfish heaven, and a hell of infinite revenge; it has filled the world with hatred, war, and crime, with the malice of meekness and the arrogance of humility. Superstition is the only enemy of science in all the world.

Nations, races, have been destroyed by this monster. For nearly two thousand years the infallible agent of God has lived in Italy. That country has been covered with nunneries, monasteries, cathedrals, and temples—filled with all varieties of priests and holy men. For centuries Italy was enriched with the gold of the faithful. All roads led to Rome, and these roads were filled with pilgrims bearing gifts, and yet Italy, in spite of all the prayers, steadily pursued the downward path, died, and was buried, and would at this moment be in her grave had it not been for Cavour, Mazzini, and Garibaldi. For her poverty, her misery, she is indebted to the holy Catholic Church, to the infallible agents of God. For the life she has she is in-

debted to the enemies of superstition. A few years ago Italy was great enough to build a monument to Giordano Bruno—Bruno, the victim of the “Triumphant Beast”—Bruno, the sublimest of her sons.

Spain was at one time owner of half the earth, and held within her greedy hands the gold and silver of the world. At that time all nations were in the darkness of superstition. At that time the world was governed by priests. Spain clung to her creed. Some nations began to think, but Spain continued to believe. In some countries priests lost power; but not in Spain. The power behind her throne was the cowed monk. In some countries men began to interest themselves in science, but not in Spain. Spain told her beads and continued to pray to the Virgin. Spain was busy saving her soul. In her zeal she destroyed herself. She relied on the supernatural; not on knowledge, but superstition. Her prayers were never answered. The saints were dead. They could not help, and the Blessed Virgin did not hear. Some countries were in the dawn of a new day, but Spain gladly remained in the night. With fire and sword she exterminated the men who thought. Her greatest festival was the *Auto da Fe*. Other nations grew great while Spain grew small. Day by day her power waned, but her faith increased. One by one her colonies were lost, but she kept her creed. She gave her gold to superstition, her brain to priests; but she faithfully counted her beads. Only a few days ago, relying on her God and his priests, on charms and amulets, on holy water and pieces of the true cross, she waged war against the great Republic. Bishops blessed her armies and sprinkled holy water on her ships, and yet her armies were defeated and captured, her ships battered, beached, and burned, and in her helplessness she sued for peace. But she has her creed; her superstition is not lost. Poor Spain, wrecked by faith, the victim of religion!

Portugal, slowly dying, growing poorer every day, still clings to the faith. Her

prayers are never answered, but she makes them still. Austria is nearly gone, a victim of superstition. Germany is travelling towards the night. God placed her Kaiser on the throne. The people must obey. Philosophers and scientists fall upon their knees and become the puppets of the divinely crowned.

VII.

The believers in the supernatural, in a power superior to nature, in God, have what they call "inspired books." These books contain the absolute truth. They must be believed. He who denies them will be punished with eternal pain. These books are not addressed to human reason. They are above reason. They care nothing for what a man calls "facts." Facts that do not agree with these books are mistakes. These books are independent of human experience, of human reason.

Our inspired books constitute what we call the "Bible." The man who reads this inspired book, looking for contradictions, mistakes, and interpolations, imperils the salvation of his soul. While he reads he has no right to think, no right to reason. To believe is his only duty.

Millions of men have wasted their lives in the study of this book—in trying to harmonise contradictions, and to explain the obscure and seemingly absurd. In doing this they have justified nearly every crime and every cruelty. In its follies they have found the profoundest wisdom. Hundreds of creeds have been constructed from its inspired passages. Probably no two of its readers have agreed as to its meaning. Thousands have studied Hebrew and Greek that they might read the Old and New Testaments in the languages in which they were written. The more they studied, the more they differed. By the same book they proved that nearly everybody is to be lost, and that all are to be saved; that slavery is a divine institution, and that all men should be free; that polygamy is right, and that no man should

have more than one wife; that the powers that be are ordained of God, and that the people have a right to overturn and destroy the powers that be; that all the actions of men were predestined—pre-ordained from eternity, and yet that man is free; that all the heathen will be lost; that all the heathen will be saved; that all men who live according to the light of nature will be damned for their pains; that you must be baptised by sprinkling; that you must be baptised by immersion; that there is no salvation without baptism; that baptism is useless; that you must believe in the Trinity; that it is sufficient to believe in God; that you must believe that a Hebrew peasant was God; that at the same time he was half man, that he was of the blood of David through his supposed father, Joseph, who was not his father, and that it is not necessary to believe that Christ was God; that you must believe that the Holy Ghost proceeded; that it makes no difference whether you do or not; that you must keep the Sabbath holy; that Christ taught nothing of the kind; that Christ established a Church; that he established no Church; that the dead are to be raised; that there is to be no resurrection; that Christ is coming again; that he has made his last visit; that Christ went to hell and preached to the spirits in prison; that he did nothing of the kind; that all the Jews are going to perdition; that they are all going to heaven; that all the miracles described in the Bible were performed; that some of them were not, because they are foolish, childish, and idiotic; that all the Bible is inspired; that some of the books are not inspired; that there is to be a general judgment, when the sheep and goats are to be divided; that there never will be any general judgment; that the sacramental bread and wine are changed into the flesh and blood of God and the Trinity; that they are not changed; that God has no flesh or blood; that there is a place called "purgatory"; that there is no such place; that unbaptised infants will be lost; that they will be saved;

that we must believe the Apostles' Creed ; that the Apostles made no creed ; that the Holy Ghost was the father of Christ ; that Joseph was his father ; that the Holy Ghost had the form of a dove ; that there is no Holy Ghost ; that heretics should be killed ; that you must not resist evil ; that you should murder unbelievers ; that you must love your enemies ; that you should take no thought for the morrow, but should be diligent in business ; that you should lend to all who ask, and that one who does not provide for his own household is worse than an infidel.

In defence of all these creeds, all these contradictions, thousands of volumes have been written, millions of sermons have been preached, countless swords reddened with blood, and thousands and thousands of nights made lurid with the faggots' flames.

Hundreds and hundreds of commentators have obscured and darkened the meaning of the plainest texts, spiritualised dates, names, numbers, and even genealogies. They have degraded the poetic, changed parables to history, and imagery to stupid and impossible facts. They have wrestled with rhapsody and prophecy, with visions and dreams, with illusions and delusions, with myths and miracles, with the blunders of ignorance, the ravings of insanity, and the ecstasy of hysterics. Millions of priests and preachers have added to the mysteries of the inspired book by explanation, by showing the wisdom of foolishness, the foolishness of wisdom, the mercy of cruelty, and the probability of the impossible.

The theologians made the Bible a master, and the people its slaves. With this book they destroyed intellectual veracity, the natural manliness of man. With this book they banished pity from the heart, subverted all ideas of justice and fairness, imprisoned the soul in the dungeon of fear, and made honest doubt a crime.

Think of what the world has suffered from fear. Think of the millions who

were driven to insanity. Think of the fearful nights—nights filled with phantoms, with flying, crawling monsters, with hissing serpents that slowly uncoiled, with vague and formless horrors, with burning and malicious eyes.

Think of the fear of death, of infinite wrath, of everlasting revenge in the prisons of fire, of an eternity of thirst, of endless regret, of the sobs and sighs, the shrieks and groans of eternal pain !

Think of the hearts hardened, of the hearts broken, of the cruelties inflicted, of the agonies endured, of the lives darkened.

The inspired Bible has been and is the greatest curse of Christendom, and will so remain as long as it is held to be inspired.

VIII.

Our God was made by men, sculptured by savages who did the best they could. They made our God somewhat like themselves, and gave to him their passions, their ideas of right and wrong.

As man advanced he slowly changed his God—took a little ferocity from his heart, and put the light of kindness in his eyes. As man progressed he obtained a wider view, extended the intellectual horizon, and again he changed his God, making him as nearly perfect as he could, and yet this God was patterned after those who made him. As man became civilised, as he became merciful, he began to love justice, and as his mind expanded his ideal became purer, nobler, and so his God became more merciful, more loving.

In our day Jehovah has been outgrown. He is no longer the perfect. Now theologians talk, not about Jehovah, but about a God of love, call him the Eternal Father and the perpetual friend and providence of man. But, while they talk about this God of love, cyclones wreck and rend, the earthquake devours, the flood destroys, the red bolt leaping from the cloud still crashes the life out of men, and plague and fever still are tireless reapers in the harvest-fields of death.

They tell us now that all is good; that evil is but blessing in disguise, that pain makes strong and virtuous men—makes character—while pleasure enfeebles and degrades. If this be so, the souls in hell should grow to greatness, while those in heaven should shrink and shrivel.

But we know that good is good. We know that good is not evil, and that evil is not good. We know that light is not darkness, and that darkness is not light. But we do not feel that good and evil were planned and caused by a supernatural God. We regard them both as necessities. We neither thank nor curse. We know that some evil can be avoided, and that the good can be increased. We know that this can be done by increasing knowledge, by developing the brain.

As Christians have changed their God, so they have accordingly changed their Bible. The impossible and absurd, the cruel and the infamous, have been mostly thrown aside, and thousands are now engaged in trying to save the inspired word. Of course, the orthodox still cling to every word, and still insist that every line is true. They are literalists. To them the Bible means exactly what it says. They want no explanation. They care nothing for commentators. Contradictions cannot disturb their faith. They deny that any contradictions exist. They loyally stand by the sacred text, and they give it the narrowest possible interpretation. They are like the janitor of an apartment-house who refused to rent a flat to a gentleman because he said he had children. "But," said the gentleman, "my children are both married and live in Iowa." "That makes no difference," said the janitor; "I am not allowed to rent a flat to any man who has children."

All the orthodox Churches are obstructions on the highway of progress. Every orthodox creed is a chain, a dungeon. Every believer in the "inspired book" is a slave who drives reason from her throne, and in her stead crowns fear.

Reason is the light, the sun, of the brain. It is the compass of the mind,

the ever-constant Northern Star, the mountain peak that lifts itself above all clouds.

IX.

There were centuries of darkness when religion had control of Christendom. Superstition was almost universal. Not one in twenty thousand could read or write. During these centuries the people lived with their back to the sunrise, and pursued their way towards the dens of ignorance and faith. There was no progress, no invention, no discovery. On every hand cruelty and worship, persecution and prayer. The priests were the enemies of thought, of investigation. They were the shepherds, and the people were their sheep, and it was their business to guard the flock from the wolves of thought and doubt. This world was of no importance compared with the next. This life was to be spent in preparing for the life to come. The gold and labour of men were wasted in building cathedrals, and in supporting the pious and the useless. During these Dark Ages of Christianity, as I said before, nothing was invented, nothing was discovered, calculated to increase the well-being of men. The energies of Christendom were wasted in the vain effort to obtain assistance from the supernatural.

For centuries the business of Christians was to wrest from the followers of Mohammed the empty sepulchre of Christ. Upon the altar of this folly millions of lives were sacrificed, and yet the soldiers of the impostor were victorious, and the wretches who carried the banner of Christ were scattered like leaves before the storm.

There was, I believe, one invention during these ages. It is said that, in the thirteenth century, Roger Bacon, a Franciscan monk, invented gunpowder, but this invention was without a fellow. Yet we cannot give Christianity the credit, because Bacon was an infidel, and was great enough to say that in all things reason must be the standard. He was

persecuted and imprisoned, as most sensible men were in those blessed days. The Church was triumphant. The sceptre and mitre were in her hands, and yet her success was the result of force and fraud, and it carried within itself the seeds of its defeat. The Church attempted the impossible. It endeavoured to make the world of one belief; to force all minds to a common form, and utterly destroy the individuality of man. To accomplish this it employed every art and artifice that cunning could suggest. It inflicted every cruelty by every means that malice could invent.

But, in spite of all, a few men began to think. They became interested in the affairs of this world—in the great panorama of nature. They began to seek for causes, for the explanations of phenomena. They were not satisfied with the assertions of the Church. These thinkers withdrew their gaze from the skies and looked at their own surroundings. They were unspiritual enough to desire comfort here. They became sensible and secular, worldly and wise.

What was the result? They began to invent, to discover, to find the relation between facts, the conditions of happiness, and the means that would increase the well-being of their fellow-men.

Movable types were invented, paper was borrowed from the Moors, books appeared, and it became possible to save the intellectual wealth so that each generation could hand it to the next. History began to take the place of legend and rumour. The telescope was invented. The orbits of the stars were traced, and men became citizens of the universe. The steam engine was constructed, and now steam, the great slave, does the work of hundreds of millions of men. The Black Art, the impossible, was abandoned, and chemistry, the useful, took its place. Astrology became astronomy. Kepler discovered the three great laws, one of the greatest triumphs of human genius, and our constellation became a poem, a symphony. Newton gave us the mathematical expression of

the attraction of gravitation. Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood. He gave us the fact, and Draper gave us the reason. Steamships conquered the seas, and railways covered the land. Houses and streets were lighted with gas. Through the invention of matches fire became the companion of man. The art of photography became known; the sun became an artist. Telegraphs and cables were invented. The lightning became a carrier of thought, and the nations became neighbours. Anæsthetics were discovered, and pain was lost in sleep. Surgery became a science. The telephone was invented—the telephone that carries and deposits in listening ears the waves of words. The phonograph, that catches and retains in marks and dots and gives again the echoes of our speech.

Then came electric light that fills the night with day, and all the wonderful machines that use the subtle force—the same force that leaps from the summer cloud to ravage and destroy: the Spectrum analysis, that tells us of the substance of the sun; the Röntgen rays that change the opaque to the transparent. The great thinkers demonstrated the indestructibility of force and matter—demonstrated that the indestructible could not have been created. The geologist, in rocks and deposits and mountains and continents, read a little of the story of the world—of its changes, of the glacial epochs—the story of vegetable and animal life. The biologists, through the fossil forms of life, established the antiquity of man, and demonstrated the worthlessness of Holy Writ. Then came evolution, the survival of the fittest, and natural selection. Thousands of mysteries were explained, and science wrested the sceptre from superstition. The cell theory was advanced, and embryology was studied; the microscope discovered germs of disease, and taught us how to stay the plague. These great theories and discoveries, together with countless inventions, are the children of intellectual liberty.

X.

After all, we know but little. In the darkness of life there are a few gleams of light. Possibly the dropping of a dish-cloth prophesies the coming of company, but we have no evidence. Possibly it is dangerous for thirteen to dine together, but we have no evidence. Possibly a maiden's matrimonial chances are determined by the number of seeds in an apple, or by the number of leaves on a flower, but we have no evidence. Possibly certain stones give good luck to the wearer, while the wearing of others brings loss and death. Possibly a glimpse of the new moon over the left shoulder brings misfortune. Possibly there are curative virtues in old bones, in sacred rags and holy hairs, in images and bits of wood, in rusty nails and dried blood; but the trouble is, we have no evidence. Possibly comets, eclipses, and shooting stars foretell the death of kings, the destruction of nations, or the coming of plague. Possibly devils take possession of the bodies and minds of men. Possibly witches, with the Devil's help, control the winds, breed storms on sea and land, fill summer's lap with frosts and snow, and work with charm and spell against the public weal; but of this we have no evidence. It may be that all the miracles described in the Old and New Testament were performed; that the pallid flesh of the dead felt once more the thrill of life; that the corpse arose and felt upon his smiling lips the kiss of wife and child. Possibly water was turned into wine, loaves and fishes increased, and possibly devils were expelled from men and women; possibly fishes were found with money in their mouths; possibly clay and spittle brought back the light to sightless eyes, and possibly words cured disease and made the leper clean; but of this we have no evidence.

Possibly iron floated, rivers divided, waters burst from dry bones, birds carried food to prophets, and angels flourished drawn swords; but of this we have no evidence.

Possibly Jehovah employed lying spirits to deceive a king, and all the wonders of the savage world may have happened; but the trouble is, there is no proof.

So there may be a Devil, almost infinite in cunning and power, and he may have a countless number of imps whose only business is to sow the seeds of evil, and to vex, mislead, capture, and imprison in eternal flames the souls of men. All this, so far as we know, is possible. All we know is that we have no evidence except the assertions of ignorant priests.

Possibly there is a place called "hell," where all the devils live—a hell whose flames are waiting for all the men who think and have the courage to express their thoughts, for all who fail to credit priests and sacred books, for all who walk the path that reason lights, for all the good and brave who lack credulity and faith; but of this, I am happy to say, there is no proof.

And so there may be a place called "heaven," the home of God, where angels float and fly and play on harps and hear with joy the groans and shrieks of the lost in hell; but of this there is no evidence.

It all rests on dreams and visions of the insane.

There may be a power superior to nature, a power that governs and directs all things; but the existence of this power has not been established.

In the presence of the mysteries of life and thought, of force and substance, of growth and decay, of birth and death, of joy and pain, of the sufferings of the good, the triumphs of wrong, the intelligent honest man is compelled to say: "I do not know."

But we do know how gods and devils, heavens and hells, have been made. We know the history of inspired books—the origin of religions. We know how the seeds of superstition were planted, and what made them grow. We know that all superstitions, all creeds, all follies and mistakes, all crimes and cruelties, all

virtues, vices, hopes, and fears, all discoveries and inventions, have been naturally produced. By the light of reason we divide the useful from the hurtful, the false from the true.

We know the past—the paths that man has travelled—his mistakes, his triumphs. We know a few facts, a few fragments; and the imagination, the artist of the mind, with these facts, these fragments, rebuilds the past, and on the canvas of the future deftly paints the things to be.

We believe in the natural, in the unbroken and unbreakable succession of causes and effects. We deny the existence of the supernatural. We do not believe in any God who can be pleased with incense, with kneeling, with bell-ringing, psalm-singing, bead-counting, fasting, or prayer—in any God who can be flattered by words of faith or fear.

We believe in the natural. We have no fear of devils, ghosts, or hells. We believe that Mahatmas, astral bodies, materialisations of spirits, crystal gazing, seeing the future, telepathy, mind-reading, and Christian Science are only cunning frauds, the genuineness of which is established by the testimony of incompetent, honest witnesses. We believe that Cunning plates fraud with the gold of honesty, and veneers vice with virtue.

We know that millions are seeking the impossible—trying to secure the aid of the supernatural—to solve the problem of life—to guess the riddle of destiny, and to pluck from the future its secret. We know that all their efforts are in vain.

We believe in the natural. We believe in home and fireside—in wife and child and friend—in the realities of this world. We have faith in facts—in knowledge—in the development of the brain. We

throw away superstition and welcome science. We banish the phantoms, the mistakes, and lies, and cling to the truth. We do not enthrone the unknown and crown our ignorance. We do not stand with our backs to the sun and mistake our shadow for God.

We do not create a master and thankfully wear his chains. We do not enslave ourselves. We want no leaders—no followers. Our desire is that every human being shall be true to himself, to his ideal, unbribed by promises, careless of threats. We want no tyrant on the earth or in the air.

We know that superstition has given us delusions and illusions, dreams and visions, ceremonies and cruelties, faith and fanaticism, beggars and bigots, persecutions and prayers, theology and torture, piety and poverty, saints and slaves, miracles and mummeries, disease and death.

We know that science has given us all we have of value. Science is the only civiliser. It has freed the slave, clothed the naked, fed the hungry, lengthened life, given us homes and hearths, pictures and books, ships and railways, telegraphs and cables, engines that tirelessly turn the countless wheels, and it has destroyed the monsters, the phantoms, the winged horrors that filled the savage brain.

Science is the real redeemer. It will put honesty above hypocrisy; mental veracity above all belief. It will teach the religion of usefulness. It will destroy bigotry in all its forms. It will put thoughtful doubt above thoughtless faith. It will give us philosophers, thinkers, and savants, instead of priests, theologians, and saints. It will abolish poverty and crime, and—greater, grander, nobler than all else—it will make the whole world free.

ADVICE TO PARENTS

PARENTS who do not believe the Bible to be an inspired book should not teach their children that it is. They should be absolutely honest. Hypocrisy is not a virtue, and, as a rule, untruths are less valuable than facts.

A Rationalist should not allow the mind of his child to be deformed, stunted, and shrivelled by superstition. He should not allow the child's imagination to be polluted. Nothing is more outrageous than to take advantage of the helplessness of childhood to sow in the brain the seeds of falsehood, to imprison the soul in the dungeon of fear, to teach dimpled infancy the infamous dogma of eternal pain—filling life with the glow and glare of hell.

No Rationalist should allow his child to be tortured in the orthodox inquisitions. He should defend the mind from attack as he would the body. He should recognise the rights of the soul. In the orthodox Sunday schools children are taught that it is a duty to believe, that evidence is not essential, that faith is independent of facts, and that religion is superior to reason. They are taught not to use their natural sense, not to tell what they really think, not to entertain a doubt, not to ask wicked questions, but to accept and believe what their teachers say. In this way the minds of the children are invaded, corrupted, and conquered. Would an educated man send his child to a school in which Newton's statement in regard to the attraction of gravitation was denied; in which the law of falling bodies, as given by Galileo, was ridiculed; Kepler's three laws declared to be idiotic, and the rotary motion of the earth held to be utterly absurd?

Why, then, should an intelligent man allow his child to be taught the geology

and astronomy of the Bible? Children should be taught to seek for the truth—to be honest, kind, generous, merciful, and just. They should be taught to love liberty and to live to the ideal.

Why should an "unbeliever," who believes in the uniformity of nature—in the unbroken and unbreakable chain of cause and effect—allow his child to be taught that miracles have been performed; that men have gone bodily to heaven; that millions have been miraculously fed with manna and quails; that fire has refused to burn the clothes and flesh of men; that iron has been made to float; that the earth and moon have been stopped, and that the earth has not only been stopped, but made to turn the other way; that devils inhabit the bodies of men and women; that diseases have been cured with words; and that the dead, with a touch, have been made to live again?

The thoughtful man knows that there is not the slightest evidence that these miracles ever were performed. Why should he allow his children to be stuffed with these foolish and impossible falsehoods? Why should he give his lambs to the care and keeping of the wolves and hyenas of superstition?

Children should be taught only what somebody knows. Guesses should not be palmed off on them as demonstrated facts. If a Christian lived in Constantinople, he would not send his children to the mosque to be taught that Mohammed was a prophet of God and that the Koran is an inspired book. Why? Because he does not believe in Mohammed or the Koran. That is reason enough. So an Agnostic, living in New York, should not allow his children to be taught that the Bible is

an inspired book. I use the word "Agnostic" because I prefer it to the word "Atheist." As a matter of fact, no one knows that God exists, and no one knows that God does not exist. To my mind there is no evidence that God exists—that this world is governed by a being of infinite goodness, wisdom, and power; but I do not pretend to know. What I do insist upon is that children should not be poisoned, should not be taken advantage of; that they should be treated fairly, honestly; that they should be allowed to develop from the inside instead of being crammed from the outside; that they should be taught to reason, not to believe; to think, to investigate, and to use their senses, their minds.

My advice to Rationalists is to keep their children from the orthodox Sunday

schools, from the orthodox churches, from the poison of the pulpits.

Teach your children the facts you know. If you do not know, say so. Be as honest as you are ignorant. Do all you can to develop their minds to the end that they may live useful and happy lives.

Strangle the serpent of superstition that crawls and hisses about the cradle. Keep your children from the augurs, the soothsayers, the medicine-men, the priests of the supernatural. Tell them that all religions have been made by folks, and that all the "sacred books" were written by ignorant men.

Teach them that the world is natural. Teach them to be absolutely honest. Do not send them where they will contract diseases of the mind—the leprosy of the soul. Let us do all we can to make them intelligent.

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE

THERE is not in this world a nobler, braver man than George Jacob Holyoake. In England he has done more for the great cause of intellectual liberty than any other man of this generation. He has done more for the poor, for the children of toil, for the homeless and wretched, than any other living man. He has attacked all abuses, all tyranny, and all forms of hypocrisy. His weapons have been reason, logic, facts, kindness, and, above all, example. He has lived his creed. He has won the admiration and respect of his bitterest antagonists. He has the simplicity of childhood, the enthusiasm of youth, and the wisdom of age. He is not abusive, but he is clear and conclusive. He is intense without violence, firm without anger. He has the strength of perfect kindness. He does not hate—he pities. He does not attack men and women, but dogmas and creeds. And he does not attack them to get the better of people, but to enable

people to get the better of them. He gives the light he has. He shares his intellectual wealth with the orthodox poor. He assists without insulting, guides without arrogance, and enlightens without outrage. Besides, he is eminent for the exercise of plain common sense. He knows that there are wrongs besides those born of superstition—that people are not necessarily happy because they have renounced the Thirty-nine Articles, and that the priest is not the only enemy of mankind. He has for forty years been preaching and practising industry, economy, self-reliance, and kindness. He has done all within his power to give the working-man a better home, better food, better wages, and better opportunities for the education of his children. He has demonstrated the success of co-operation—of intelligent combination for the common good. As a rule, his methods have been perfectly legal. In some instances he has knowingly violated

the law, and did so with the intention to take the consequences. He would neither ask nor accept a pardon, because to receive a pardon carries with it the implied promise to keep the law, and an admission that you were in the wrong. He would not agree to desist from doing what he believed ought to be done, neither would he stain his past to brighten his future, nor imprison his soul to free his body. He has that happy mingling of gentleness and firmness found only in the highest type of moral heroes. He is an absolutely just man, and will never do an act that he would condemn in another. He admits that the most bigoted Churchman has not only a perfect right to express opinions, but that he must be met with argument couched in kind and candid terms. Mr. Holyoake is not only the enemy of a theological hierarchy, but he is also opposed to mental mobs. He will not use the bludgeon of epithet.

Perfect fairness is regarded by many as weakness. Some people have altogether more confidence in their beliefs than in their own arguments. They resort to assertion. If what they assert be denied, the "debate" becomes a question of veracity. On both sides of most questions there are plenty of persons who imagine that logic dwells only in adjectives, and that to speak kindly of an opponent is a virtual surrender.

Mr. Holyoake attacks the Church because it has been, is, and ever will be, the enemy of mental freedom; but he does not wish to deprive the Church even of its freedom to express its opinion against freedom. He is true to his own creed, knowing that when we have freedom we can take care of all its enemies.

I know of no one who is Mr. Holyoake's mental or moral superior. He is the most disinterested of men. His name is a synonym of candour. He is a natural logician—an intellectual marksman. Like an unerring arrow, his thought flies to the heart and centre. He is governed by principle, and makes no exception in his own favour. He is

intellectually honest. He shows you the cracks and flaws in his own wares. He calls attention to the open joints and to the weakest links. He does not want a victory for himself, but for truth. He wishes to expose and oppose, not men, but error. He is blessed with that cloudless mental vision that appearances cannot deceive, that interest cannot darken, and that even ingratitude cannot blur. Friends cannot induce, and enemies cannot drive, this man to do an act that his heart and brain would not applaud. That such a character was formed without the aid of the Church, without the hope of harp or fear of flame, is a demonstration against the necessity of superstition.

Whoever is opposed to mental bondage, to the shackles wrought by cruelty and worn by fear, should be the friend of this heroic and unselfish man.

I know something of his life—something of what he has suffered—of what he has accomplished for his fellow-men. He has been maligned, imprisoned, and impoverished. "He bore the heat and burden of the unregarded day," and "remembered the misery of the many." For years his only recompense was ingratitude. At last he was understood. He was recognised as an earnest, honest, gifted, generous, sterling man, loving his country, sympathising with the poor, honouring the useful, and holding in supreme abhorrence tyranny and falsehood in all their forms.

Read his *Trial of Theism*—his history of *Co-operation in England*—if you wish to know his heart—to discover the motives of his life—the depth and tenderness of his sympathy—the nobleness of his nature—the subtlety of his thought—the beauty of his spirit—the force and volume of his brain—the extent of his information—his candour, his kindness, his genius, and the perfect integrity of his stainless soul.

There is no man for whom I have greater respect, greater reverence, greater love, than George Jacob Holyoake.

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